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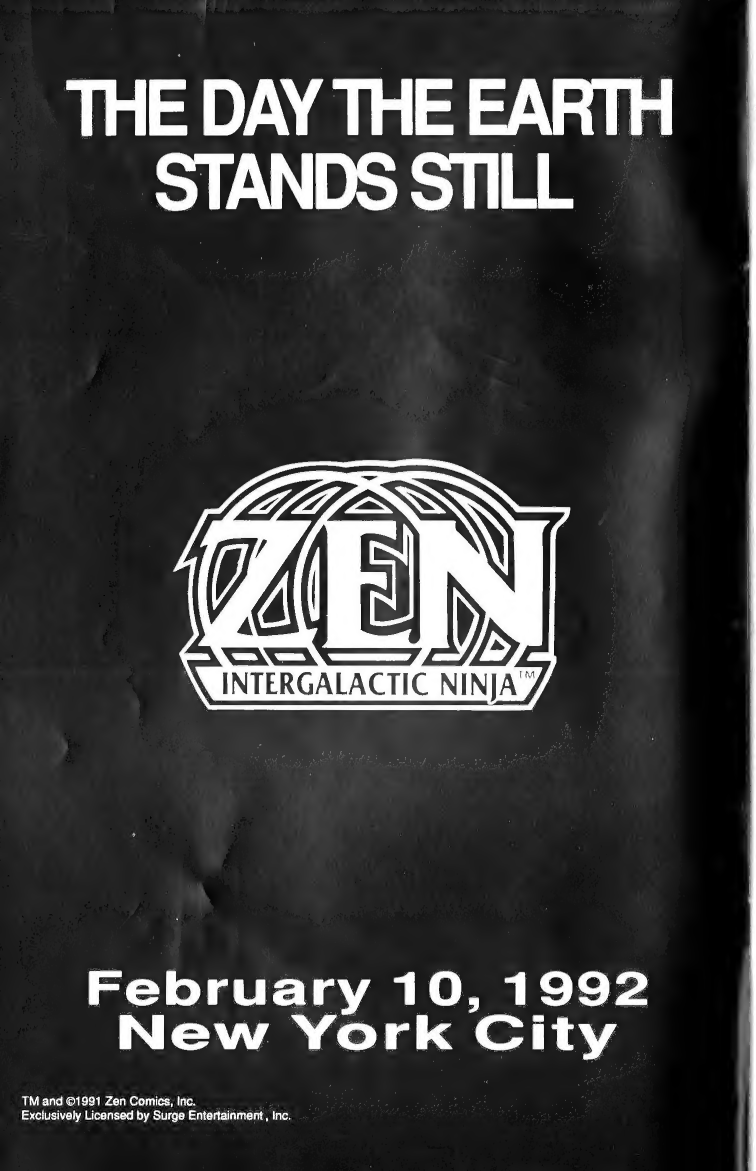
AMAZING HEROES

The Once & Future WONDER WOMAN

MARVEL TOYS PAST & PRESENT

MOVIE NEWS: SPIDER-MAN, BATMAN & MORE





EDITORIAL

The Brian Bolland Interview: Man, I don't know what it is with this magazine and its previews these days. First I read that there's going to be a Brian Bolland interview this issue, *then* I read that there's going to be a Peter David interview in *AH* #198. Well, Peter David should be in the next ish, but not in an interview. Since we conducted a major interview with Peter not too long ago (*AH* #175), he agreed to instead write a few words about the Hulk for our "Perspective."

But Brian Bolland! Sure he's done this great cover, but we had a mega-Bolland interview in *AH* #191, just six months ago. Still, if you *really* want one:

THE BRIAN BOLLAND INTERVIEW

Brian Bolland is an artist. By this I mean that he draws pictures. But not just any pictures. Brian Bolland draws comic book pictures. But not just any comic book pictures. Brian Bolland draws rectangular covers of super-hero comic book pictures. Not too *rectangular, mind you. Just about the same dimensions as an average comic book, generally.*

This interview was conducted on November 14 via a trans-Atlantic phone call, courtesy of ATT. Brian was courteous, friendly, and most important of all, in a hurry to get off the phone. But now on to the interview, so you don't have to read any more of these sentence fragments.

But not just any sentence fragments.

—Thomas Harrington

AMAZING HEROES: *So Brian, I understand you're doing the covers to* Wonder Woman.

BRIAN BOLLAND: Yes.

Fred MacMurray: This issue's "Amazing Readers" has a lot of interesting responses to the trivia question from *AH* #195, "Who was the original Captain Marvel Modeled after?." The answer was Fred MacMurray, who passed away just as the issue hit the stands.

I was a little disappointed that none of the obituaries I read made any mention of his influence on Captain Marvel, but I wasn't surprised. Though he was one of the few super-heroes to have entered the national consciousness, Captain Marvel has become increasingly forgotten since National's lawsuit (alleging that he was plagiarized from Superman) took him out of the public eye.

What really surprised me, though, was that so many tributes to MacMurray mentioned only *My Three Sons* and his Disney movies, forgetting that these were preceeded by an entire career in movies that included such classics as *Double Indemnity, The Caine Mutiny,* and *The Apartment.* A press made of and for baby-boomers, though, reduced him to only what *they* remembered seeing of him in their childhood.

I often wish that comics fans had more of a sense of the history of their medium. This incident, however, makes me realize that comic fans have a far better appreciation of their modest field's history than most people have of *anything*, even their own culture, even their own pop culture, and even such great pop culture as those Fred MacMurray classics.

Marvel Vs. DC—The Final Verdict: Democrat or Republican? Capitalism or communism? Coke or Pepsi? *The Simpsons* or *The Cosby Show*? Smoking or non-smoking? These are the eternal debates that may never be resolved. One Fantagraphics employee, however, was privileged to see the "Marvel or DC" question solved for all time solved by two young fans in a comic book store.

The first lad (you know you're getting older when you start using that word) was a staunch Marvel supporter The other sided with DC though with considerably less fervor.

Still, their debate was touch and go all the way, the marvelite determined to destroy DC's credibility, the DC-er politely appreciating Marvel, but refusing to dismiss the publisher of *Batman*.

Finally, the marvelite played his trump card. "Let's let Wolverine decide," he proclaimed, pulling a claw-covered comic book off the shelves. He leafed through the pages, cataloging the acts of violence and mayhem to his doubting companion. "Look He kills somebody...the villain kills somebody...three guys shot...car crash...." Finally, he slammed the book shut and looked to his opponent for a response. "Gee," the other kid said, "I guess Marvel *is* the best."

Marvel-ous Debt: Marvel fans would have good reason to be proud of their company's smash performance in the Stock Market. Marvel Comics raised $82 million in its IPO (initial public offering).

Marvel probably won't be seeing any of that money.

Why, you might ask. Good question. Marvel has become the property of Junk Bond King Ron Perelman. Junk bonds, once thought to be the something-for-nothing way to get rich, have gained a deserved reputation as an unscrupulous and dangerous (though of course, legal and popular) way to "get rich now, pay later."

Perelman purchased Marvel in 1988 for $84 million, $73.5 million of which was borrowed from banks. Perelman got most of his properties through junk bonds. With junk bonds, you can take control of a company by offering far for it than it's worth. Taking over companies is easy when you use junk bonds. The hard part is paying off the massive debt afterwards. However, it is the company that winds up with the debt, not its buyer. Beautiful system, huh?

Actually, Marvel turned out to be a real cash cow for Perelman. *Newsday* estimated that "Perelman will have made $163 million on a $10.5 million investment in less than three years." (This estimate was written before Marvel's IPO turned out to be such a bonanza.)

Of course, that's good news for Perelman, not for Marvel. And even though Marvel is pulling its own weight. Perelman still owes about a billion dollars in bank debts from other aquisitions, and that's why he put 30% of Marvel up for sale. In other words, the money you spent on Marvel stock will not benefit Marvel in any way. Meanwhile, Perelman plans to take $10 million from Marvel as a "dividend" for himself.

Nobody who works at Marvel can do anything about this. Perelman's the boss, and that's it. The reason that Marvel went public, the reason why it's raising prices, the reason why it's going to greatly increase the number of its of titles is because it is now engaged in the business of paying off debts that it is in no way responsible for. A company that should be doing just fine is scrambling around for money, and will probably continue to do so even if Perelman ever does manage to get out of debt.

Back in the '70s, Marvel had a slogan that read "Marvel: We're #1 but we *still* try harder." That's more true than it ever was, but it's not just because they care. It's because they're desperate.

—THOMAS HARRINGTON



THE NEW WONDER WOMAN 28

The new editor and writer of *Wonder Woman* take the world's most famous super-heroine in new directions.
feature by Charles Novinskie



THE ORIGINAL PRINCESS DIANA 36

In the fifty years since her creation, Charles Moulton's brainchild has probably survived more changes (in politics, editors, and fashion) than any other comics character.
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SPIDER-MAN, SPIDER-MAN, DOES WHATEVER BARBIE CAN 44

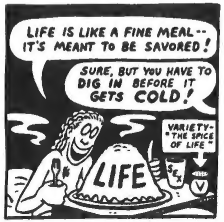
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COVER BY BRIAN BOLLAND

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HULK SMASH!

- ***An interview with popular* Hulk *artist* DALE KEOWN**
- ***A look at the Hulk's glorious history by PETER SANDERSON***
- ***Words on the Hulk by PETER DAVID***

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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

PERSPECTIVE

DOPPELGANGERS

by Michael Sutton

The relationship between the comics and the cinema is like the best love affairs: uneven, colorful and long. But the connection between the two goes beyond crossbreeds like *Superman—the Movie* and *Batman*. Just as DC's super-heroes once had doppelgangers, several of today's comic book creators have cinematic counterparts.

Howard Chaykin and Brian De Palma

Perhaps no other artists in mainstream entertainment have received as much concurrent commendation and contempt as these erotic explorers: De Palma, the director of such backseat burners as *Dressed to Kill* and *Body Double*, and Chaykin, the author/artist behind porno-pop classics like *American Flagg!* and *Black Kiss*, both excel in the kind of stylish, sleazy and suspenseful features that are either adored or deplored.

You don't even need to see the credits to know that a certain film or comic is by De Palma or Chaykin. While they're not formulaic, there are elements that appear in nearly all of these men's work: delicious damsels in distasteful distress, cleverly conceived and hypnotically executed graphic brutality, seedy sex and black comedy.

Besides their same taste in content, De Palma and Chaykin are also stylistically similar, reknowned for their flamboyant, sometimes gaudy visuals.

Grant Morrison and David Lynch

If *Twin Peaks* co-creator Lynch has a kindred spirit in comicdom, then it must be Morrison's bughouse refashioning of *Doom Patrol*. While viewers were transfixed with the lives and loves of expired prom queen/prostitute/junkie Laura Palmer, psychic G-Man Agent Cooper, the Log Lady a dancing dwarf and a superhuman cheerleader, comic book fans were slowly turned on to the adventures of a castrated cyborg with a human brain, a lass with 64 different personalities, an alien hermaphrodite inhabited by an irradiated spirit, and a teenage ape girl.

But even without these iconoclastic series, Lynch and Morrison would still be fiction's Prophets or Peculiarity. Morrison's *Animal Man* stories, *Arkham Asylum* and guest stint on *Hellblazer* were just as *outre* and outrageous as Lynch pictures like *Eraserhead* and *Blue Velvet*. While you may argue that the eccentric and experimental underground comics of Chester Brown (*Yummy Fur*) should be compared to Lynch's films instead, don't forget that Lynch has now become a household name—even made the cover of *Time*—and, like Morrison, is in the position of subverting white middle-class complacency through dangerous yet accessible creations.

Chris Claremont and John Hughes

Speaking of white middle-class complacency. . . . When it comes to providing undefiled sex fantasies for suburban white teens, no one does it better than John Hughes, the movies' Pied Piper of Puberty. The success of Hughes' acne-and-angst melodramas is just as overwhelming and unfathomable as the continuing commercial significance of his comic book double, Chris Claremont. Like Hughes, Claremont specializes in trendy adolescent tripe involving colorful, likeable misfits. Just as Hughes recycles plots (Hughes productions such as *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* are undeniable knock-offs of his own *Sixteen Candles*), Claremont has turned regurgitation into a career. But it's the fans who end up throwing up.

Paul Chadwick and Steven Spielberg

At his best, Spielberg can draw forth real human passion from the most unusual circumstances; in films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *E.T.*, Spielberg was able to convey palpable pain and tenderness amidst the magic and mayhem. Chadwick's *Concrete* comes closest to matching Spielberg's spirit on paper; Chadwick's stories are usually uplifting and tamely humorous, place ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, and also share Spielberg's enthusiasm for aliens.

John Byrne and Steven Spielberg

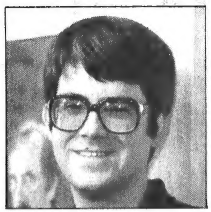
At his worst Spielberg is more interested in making money than eliciting empathy. Lukewarm efforts such as *1941*, the last two Indiana Jones flicks and *Always* show Spielberg covering up thin material with expensive effects, lighthearted wit and nostalgia. The results are often appealing and fun, but nevertheless forgettable—like a John Byrne comic book

Francis Ford Coppola and Jim Shooter

As artists, they're nothing alike (it's hard to compare *The Godfather* with Pulsar Stargrave). As businessmen, however, Coppola and Shooter dropped bombs that could be heard all the way to heaven's gate. The colossal failures of Coppola's Zoetrope Studios and Shooter's unintentionally orgasmically funny "New Universe" line of Marvel comics (even the Zombies left 'em for dead) are the stuff of Donald Trump's worst nightmares.

Bill Griffith and John Waters

Two counterculture idols—both equally unhinged and have a mutual fascination with transvestites—who have penetrated the mainstream. Griffith, the creator and cartoonist of the *Zippy* comic strip, and Waters, Baltimore's trash-movie connoisseur (director of





such low-budget sickies as *Multiple Maniacs*, the dog-poop extravaganza *Pink Flamingos* and 1990's PG-13 rated *Cry-Baby*), can now be found in major newspapers and video shops.

Steve Purcell and Savage Steve Holland

What more can be said of the man who sent Gumby to Hell and the man who made a comedy about killing yourself? Who knows what twisted motivation was behind Purcell's *Gumby's Christmas Special* and anthropomorphic howl *Sam and Max, Freelance Police* or bizarre Holland comedies like *Better Off Dead* and *How I Got Into College?* Who cares, as long as they make more.

Frank Miller and Martin Scorsese

Gritty street dramas featuring haunted, obsessed male protagonists in cities overcome with sin and sadness. Sound familiar?

Harvey Pekar and Jim Jarmusch

The "works" of Pekar and Jarmusch (of *Stranger than Paradise* and *Mystery Train* infamy) will probably remind you of those tart vegetables that some cruel parents forced their children to wolf down at suppertime: austere but supposedly good for you. However, there's nothing nutritious in the offerings of Pekar and Jarmusch. Actually, there's *nothing* there—just a lot of blandless, boredom and big egos. Alan Moore and Grant Morrison have already proven you can tell exciting stories about real life. Pekar and Jarmusch are merely reality junkies peddling their uninteresting, unimaginative lives. Just say no.

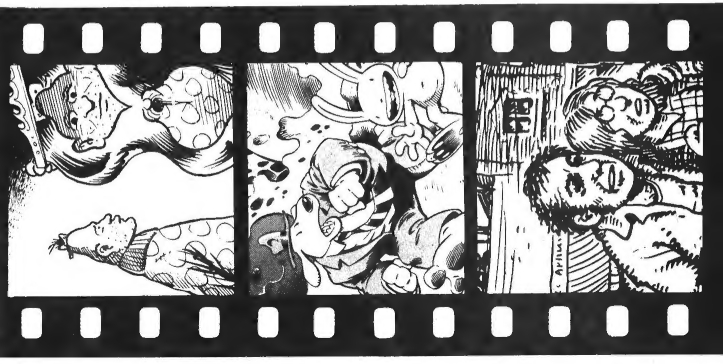
Max Allan Collins and Warren Beatty

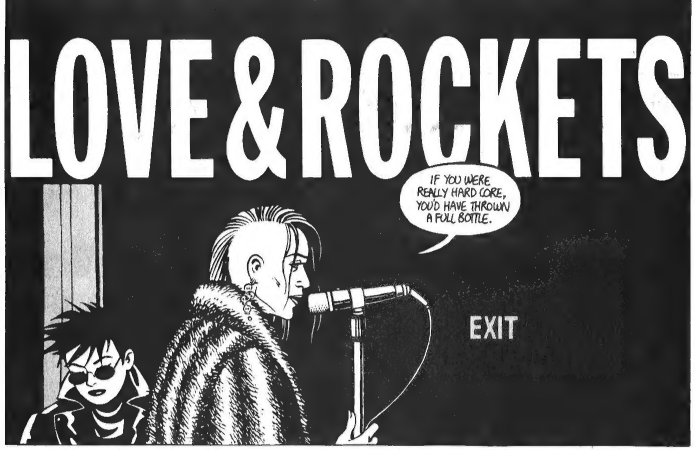
When Beatty's shallow and sloppy celluloid interpretation of Dick Tracy premiered in 1990, many critics mistakenly based their memories of the character of the original '30s strip, and not on Collins's diluted rendition of the series. As anyone who's ever read *The Celebrated Cases of Dick Tracy* (look for it at your local library) knows, the old strip was hardly kiddie litter; even the initial installments were smart and shockingly violent. In contrast, Collins's and Beatty's versions are pretty limp Dicks.

Unlike the other talents on the list, Collins and Beatty are wanna-be doppelgangers, striving to duplicate the genius of a late master. But Chester was an original, and Collins and Beatty aren't as Gould. ●

Movie madness with (left to right) Howard Chakin's *American Flagg!*, Grant Morrison's *Doom Patrol*, Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*. . . . Bill Griffith's *Zippy*, Steve Purcell's *Sam & Max*, Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor*. Above: Max Collins & Warren Beatty.







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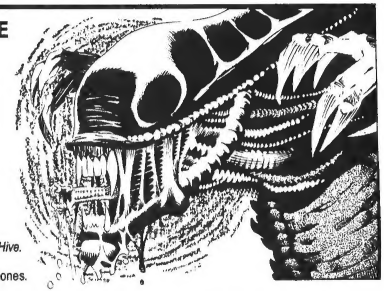
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NEWSLINE

NEW *ALIENS* AT DARK HORSE



Aliens: Hive. Art by Kelley Jones.

Aliens: Hive is a four-issue series written by Jerry Prosser, illustrated by Kelley Jones, and painted by Les Dorscheid. Julie, a beautiful young thief, forms a party of adventurers to obtain the galaxy's most valuable commodity, Alien Queen Royal Jelly. Prosser, who is certainly unbiased, says that Jones and Dorscheid depict "the best looking *Aliens* ever!"

The series also serves as an introduction to *Cyberantics*, a 56-page children's book to be released by Dark Horse in the spring of 1992. Among the characters in *Hive* is Dr. Stanislaw Mayakovsky, a man who designed a cybernetic ant which infiltrated a hive of real ants to gain knowledge of the species. Stanislaw is persuaded to join the party for personal gain, but his writings on his cybernetic ant is discovered after the mission, and published in an annoted format that is the Dark Horse book. Jerry Prosser, of course, writes the book.

Byron Press will be packaging a new *Two-Fisted Tales* for Dark Horse. The new version of the classic EC war/adventure title will be edited by the magazines's creator, Harvey Kurtzman. The cover to the first issue will apparently be by William Stout.

Various artists will adapt the Residents concept album *Freak Show*. The 72-page album will have color and black & white art by Dave McKean, Kyle Baker, Brian Bolland, Richard Sala, and others. Freaky artist Charles Burns provides the cover.

Among Dark Horse's latest promotions: coupons in *The Next Men* will allow buyers to register for prizes like the Next Men card set, Next Men prints, and a *Next Men Special Edition*. An even bigger prize is the car used in *Robocop 3*, which will be given away at the San Diego Comic Convention in 1992. The prize will promote Dark Horse's *Robocop/Terminator* four-issue series.

WALL STREET AMAZED AT MARVEL'S "SUPER HERO" PERFORMANCE

Marvel's public stock offering got its biggest exposure yet in a story in the October 24 *Wall Street Journal* that reported on what it called "Marvel's super hero performance."

Titled "Can Perelman's Future IPOs [*Initial Public Offerings*] Be as Good as Marvel's?", it reported that Marvel's stock has been climbing "almost vertically since the initial public offering in July at 16½," to over $40 a share.

Some traders are insisting that owner Ronald Perelman sold off the original 4.8 million shares in the company too cheaply, while others suggest that Perelman might have let Marvel go cheaply so that its rapid rise would pique interest in his bigger properties, such as Revlon. "I can tell you there was no plan to price it at 16 and have it go into the 30s," answered one investment banker.

Analysts said that the companies shares took off partly because of the growing number of baby boom children that could be a prime audience for Marvel's super-hero adventures in the near future, and the higher retail prices that comics go for today, as well as Marvel's promise to raise prices. Also, since Marvel was the first comic book company to go public, there was no one on Wall Street familiar with how it might perform, and thus its success came as a complete surprise.

Investors were most impressed by the potential licensing of Marvel characters, especially when Carolco paid Marvel $1.25 million for the movie rights to Spider-Man. The record sales of *X-Men* #1 was also noted, though the article pointed out that "such success will be hard to match, let alone top."

WAM's Honor Roll

Wild Agents of Marvel, Marvel's official fan club, has announced the creation of the "WAM Founding Members Honor Roll," a special membership group limited to the first 24,000 members. "I think that when fans see the kit with its exclusive full-color *X-Men* print by Whilce Portacio and Scott Williams, stationary supplies and all the other special items, they'll understand why we felt it important to spend the extra time we did producing the package," said WAM managing editor Dwight Zimmerman.

Comics

Marvel UK has announced planning "Genesis 1991," its publishing plan for early 1992. Concentrating on action and adventure titles, It will feature *Hell's Angels, Motormouth, Digitek, Pendragon* and *Warheads*.

Sweet Christmas! Luke Cage, the Marvel hero who was gritty before gritty was "in," will return in the new title *Cage* in February. Cage will move to Chicago, where his "Heroes for Hire" agency will be supported by a trashy newspaper in return for exclusive scoops on Cage's exploits. The "Big Guns" comic by Marc McLaurin, Dwight Turner and Chris Ivy will feature an interior cover and an exterior "newspaper" cover of Luke Cage.

In a sign of increasing internationalization in comics, Moebius' *Chaos*, a collection of his comic art, will be published simultaneously in five different languages by five different publishers. Marvel/Epic will handle the U.S. English version, of course. ●

DC SWITCHES PRINTERS; ORIGINAL *SWAMP THING* BACK IN *DARK GENESIS*

"Beginning on January 14, 1992, DC comic will improve the printing and paper of its standard format comic books," announced a recent company press release. After 37 years at World Color Press in Sparta, Illinois, DC's books will now be printed offset at Ronalds Printing in Montreal. Production editor Bob Rozakis says the new books will be printed "on a whiter stock which will make the inks appear more vibrant. Combined with offset printing, this gives the book a cleaner, brighter look." The new printing quality will be comparable to that of *Robin II*.

Popular artist Michael Golden has been named Cover Editor of DC's Impact line of comics. "We wanted the covers to be more dynamic," said Golden. Veteran *Batman* artist Neal Adams will be doing the covers to Impact's annuals, while Mark Beachum will now do the covers to *The Jaguar* and Michael Netzer (formerly Nasser) will do the covers to *The Comet*. Golden says he plans to give the covers a dynamic look that will more clearly distinguish them from the other DC titles.

Sandman writer Neil Gaiman has been interviewed for MTV's program *Like We Care*. Also interviewed was Andrew Helfer, who discussed the Piranha title, *Prince: Alter Ego*. No air date had been announced at press time.

Sandman #19, written by Gaiman and illustrated by Charles Vess, was awarded the World Fantasy Award for best short story at the World Fantasy Convention. DC says that this is the first time a comics story has won such an honor in direct competition with prose stories. In his acceptance speech, Gaiman said, "This isn't just an award for us, but for the comics medium in general. Comics are every bit as capable of portraying the same depth of characterization, the same range of theme, mood, tone, and quality as any other form of literature. It's wonderful to see that being recognized." Dave McKean also won an award for best fantasy artist based on his work in 1990.



From the award-winning *Sandman* #19.

Comics News

In February, *Swamp Thing: Dark Genesis* reprints the original Swamp Thing adventures by Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson. These classics established Wrightson as a star illustrator and are considered among the finest mainstream horror comics ever published. The 240-page softcover will retail for $19.95.

Todd McFarlane was not able to complete his Catwoman pin-up for *Who's Who* #16, so it will be replaced by one by Brian Stelfreeze, who recently did the cover to *Catwoman: Her Sister's Keeper*.

At press time, Simon Bisley is still not finished with *Batman Judge Dredd*. DC says that if the book ships after Christmas, it will be returnable.

DC has cancelled the *Anton Furst Portfolio* limited edition. Instead, several of the pieces can be seen in the three-part Batman crossover "Destroyer," which appears in *Batman #474*, *Legends of the Dark Knight #27*, and *Detective Comics* #641. The storyline has Batman investigating the destruction of several prominent buildings in Gotham City. The Furst designs, which will *not* be seen in *Batman Returns*, also appear in the *Batman: Gotham Nights*.

The *Enemy Ace Limited Edition* will be limited to 1000 copies rather than 2000, though the signature plate and indicia will still say it was a run of 2000.

LOTS OF BATSTUFF NEXT YEAR; WOLVERINE TOY DECLARED UNSAFE

STORE OWNER MURDERED: Farham Farzam, owner of F-5 Comics, Baseball Cards, and Hobbies, was killed in an apparent robbery on Saturday, September 21. Four men, reportedly ranging from 13 to 22, entered his West Allis, Wisconsin store around 2 p.m. A gunshot was heard, and Farzam was found dead from a point-blank shotgun wound to the chest. One story that had emerged was that the men had indended to rob another store, but went to Farzam's when they realized their initial target was too crowded. Four suspects were arrested that afternoon.

* * *

DOONESBURY SELLS OUT: *Doonesbury* cartoonist Gary Trudeau, after years of refusing to use his characters for commercial licensing, has authorized a number of high-priced Doonesbury items to be sold through a catalog called *The Doonesbury Sellout*. The profits from the high-priced items, such as a Dan Quayle polo shirt with a feather logo, will go to charities. Trudeau was the first modern syndicated cartoonist to win the merchandising rights to his characters. You can order a copy of the catalog by calling 415-331-3853.

* * *

FLEETWAY MERGES: Fleetway, publisher of *2000 AD* and other popular comic books, has merged with London Editions Magazines to form Fleetway Editions, Ltd. John Davidge and Robin Judd, the respective heads of the two publishing companies, will continue to run the separate units of the company. London Editions, part of the Gutenberghus group, is known for children's titles such as *My Litle Pony* and *Postman Pat*.

* * *

STOUT FROZEN: Comics artist William Stout was one of two people chosen this year to participate in the National Science Foundation's Antarctic Artists and Writers Program. He will live at the U.S. Antarctic base for two months beginning at the end of 1992. There he will sketch and paint wildlife for his book, *Lost World: Modern and Prehistoric Life in Antarctica*.

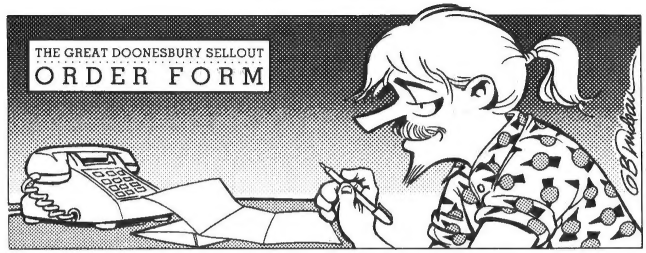
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DINOSAUR CARD CAMPAIGN: The American Library Association has named cartoonist Phil Yeh's Theo the Dinosaur and his three friends, Dewey, Dina and Dallas the official spokes-dinosaurs for a new library card campaign in 1992. The dinosaurs have been promoting reading and recycling for the past five years as part of the Cartoonists Across America tour.



* * *

WATCH IT, BUB: The Uncanny Wolverine Dress Up Play Set made consumer advocate Edward Schwartz's list of ten dangerous toys parents should avoid buying for their children. The list cited the plastic fist with plastic claws that have a potential for eye and facial injury. Logan would certainly be shocked to hear that his claws could actually *hurt someone*. Also making the list were the Breathless Mahoney Doll (removable arms could be choking hazard) and He-Man's Electronic Skeletor Skull Staff (spearlike point and heavy skull ornament could cause injury).



Order your "Club Scud" paraphernalia now!

* * *

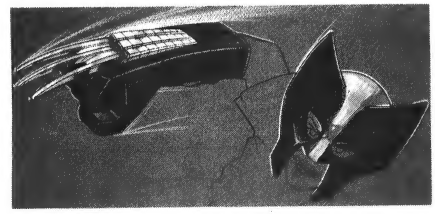
COMICS WRITERS SHOCK 'N' ROCK: John Byrne, Peter David, Bill Mumy, Mark Verheiden, Nancy A. Collins and Rex Miller are among the contributors to *Shock Rock*, a rock & roll horror anthology coming from pocket books in January, 1992. Editor Jeff Gelb said, "I had such great results from the comic book writers in my earlier *Hotter Blood* anthology that when it came time to solicit stories for this one, I put the immediate call out to comic book writers again."

* * *

COMICS PUBLISHER SUED: The Donning Company, which published many books and graphic novels from 1981 to 1988, is being sued by a dozen authors, including Colleen Doran, most recently known for *A Distant Soil*. The authors claim that Donning illegally sold rights to the authors' books. Doran is the only comics artist to be involved in the suit, but Donning had previously been sued by Wendi & Richard Pini for breach of contract over Donning's *Elfquest* books. The company has also published books by Phil Foglio, Matt Wagner, and Mark Bode.

* * *

TORPEDO WAR: Sanchez Abuli and Jordi Bernet, the Spanish creative team behind *Torpedo*, have become involved in a dispute with their former publisher, Editions Glenat. The dispute began when Glenat told them that Warner Brothers, whose film noir gangster movies are a big influence on the *Torpedo* series, was interested in developing it as a film. The enthusiastic men were told by the publisher that they had to sign a document in front of the U.S. Consulate as a formality. The short-form document they received had them signing away all rights to their work to the publisher. The two men refused to sign, stalling the movie deal. They then let their contract with Glenat lapse, and later sued Glenat for publishing a tenth volume of *Torpedo*.



* * *

COMICS EXHIBIT: *Broad Humor: Women cartoonists of the Past, Present and Future* is "the first-ever exhibition of original art by women cartoonists." The exhibit opens January 14 at the Cartoon Art Museum in San Francisco, and includes work by Lynda Barry, Marie Severin, Roberta Gregory and Wendi Pini.

* * *

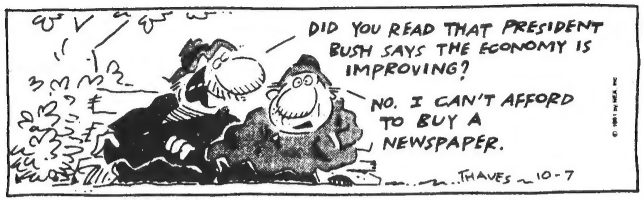
Two cartoonists made the *Forbes* list of America's highest-paid entertainers. *Peanuts* creator Charles Schulz was estimated to have earned $51 million in the past two years. *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening took in a relatively paltry $10 million.

* * *

FRANK & ERNEST POLITICS: U.S. representative Douglas Applegate, a Democrat from Ohio, recently attacked George Bush's position on the economy by reading from the October *Frank & Ernest* comic strip which read: "Did you read that President Bush says the Economy is improving?" "No. I can't afford to buy a newspaper."

* * *

NINJA IN JAPAN: *Ninja High School*



Depression—er, depressing humor from *Frank and Ernest*.

creator Ben Dunn, whose work is based on Japanese manga and animation, has gone full circle. U.K. Sun Planning, a Japanese production company, has contacted him to develop an original animation video for release in Japan. "I am very excited about the prospect of seeing *Ninja High School* animated in Japan because I know they will keep the original feel and flavor of the comic series. Unlike adaptations here, the Japanese try to remain as close to the source material as possible." The producers plan to make an English language version, and will also make Japanese translations of Dunn's work available.

* * *

SCREAMING MERCHANDISE: Superstar publishing has named Brite Idea Licensing Corp. of Needham, Massachusetts the exclusive worldwide licensing company for all merchandising of *The Adventures of the Screamer Brothers* comic book. "Not only are the Screamer Brothers exciting Kids all across the country, but they also were the hit of the June National Licensing Show in New York," said Brite Idea president Murray Bass. The comic book features the adventures of four brothers who are masters at hockey, baseball, basketball and football.

* * *

SILVER HEROES: The latest volume in Mike Benton's history of comics series is *Superhero Comics of the Silver Age: The Illustrated History*. The volume will contain over 400 full color illustrations, a complete checklist for collectors, and "an exhaustive survey of comic book artists." Taylor Publishing will release the book on January 1, 1992.

* * *

HARD COPY ON "PORNO": Rip Off Press chief editor Kathe Todd was recently interviewed by the Los Angeles-based tabloid news program *Hard Copy* for a segement on X-rated comics. The segment stressed that X-rated comics are on sale in comics shops "right next to *Spider-Man*." Todd, whom the show called "The Wonder Woman" of porno comics, said the show "obviously needed a scandal angle...but I clearly told them that we and other comics dealers are very careful in restricting this material to readers over 18." The segment was designed to raise alarm over the possibility of youngsters getting their hands on adult comics, but Todd says she hasn't seen any fallout, though the company received a surprise rash of calls from young teenagers who wanted to order their catalog.

* * *

BATSTUFF: Remember all that Batman merchandise in 1989? Well, there's going to be even more in 1991. Hoping for a repeat of the Batman craze, Warner has planned a three tiered merchandising campaign. "Teaser" items that don't give away any graphics will be offered in the first quarter of '92, followed by products featuring images from the movie in June, followed by back-to-school items that will tie in with the syndicated cartoon show next fall.

* * *

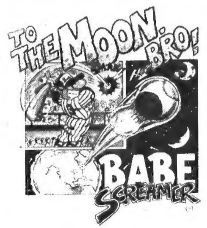
WARNERSTUFF: Meanwhile, Warner will sell much of that new batstuff at its Warner Brother Studios stores, which will carry about 2,500 items based on Warner's movies, cartoons, and DC comics characters. An obvious imitation of Disney's successful store line, the Warner stores will aim for an older audience. The four stores (in Los Angeles, CA, Schaumburg, IL, Fairfax, VA, and Danbury, CT)will feature a selection of graphic novels, as well as some of the better-selling DC newsstand titles.

* * *

NEMO SET: The long-discussed *Little Nemo in Slumberland* animated film is now set for a summer 1992 release. The Japanese/American production adapts the famous Winsor McCay comic strip which has been collected by Remco Books/Fantagraphics. The film's "screen concept" was by Ray Bradbury, and the script was by *Home Alone*'s Chris Columbus. Mickey Rooney plays the voice of Nemo's ne'er-do-well companion Flip. McCay, who was also a pioneer animator, made a silent, hand colored, animated version of *Little Nemo*.

* * *

CADILLACS & DINOSAURS FOR SALE: Mark Schultz's popular *Xenozoic Tales* might become the next big thing. Kitchen Sink, which has exclusive rights to develop Schultz's property, has reached an agreement with General Motors, Inc. that will allow it to be licensed under the name *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*. Producer Sasha Harari has optioned it for a live action movie and an animated TV show. Three software manufacturers are seeking rights to the property, and Bally has acquired pinball rights. The regular *Xenozoic* comic will retain its title, but it will be released in a higher quality format and will be subtitled *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*. ●





IN FEBRUARY: ECLIPSE'S *MAD DOGS*, INNOVATION'S *FORBIDDEN PLANET*

Adventure: Animation historian Jim Korkis will write a 12-part history of comics that will run in the back of Adventure titles throughout 1992. The first chapter, "In the Beginning," will debut in the January Adventure titles.

Archie: *Zen, Intergalactic Ninja* now has a three-issue series from Archie in addition to his regular series from Zen Comics. Written by Steve Stern and illustrated by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito, this color *Zen* series ties into the Zen toy line and the upcoming cartoon. It features the origin of Zen and the recycled heroes. *Heavy Metal* artist Jim Fletcher provides the cover to #1.

Eclipse: Writer Chuck Dixon and artist Victor Toppi are the creative team behind *Mad Dogs*, a violent three-issue series about a tough group of ex-cops who will do anything to get crime off the streets of Philadelphia. The cops, who have all been thrown off the force for violent or erratic behavior, are recruited for a special task force authorized by the District Attorney's office.

Volume 9 of *Krazy & Ignatz* is *Shed a Soft Mongolian Tear*, reprinting George Herriman *Krazy Kat* strips from 1924.

Hamilton: The latest color reprint title from Hamilton is *Maggots in Color #1*, with another cover featuring Joe Staton and Gray Morrow's gorgeous Madraven Stark.

Innovation: *Forbidden Planet*, often called the best science fiction movie of the '50s, will become a full color mini-series starting in February. Publisher David Campiti will adapt the script, Daerick Gross will be the illustrator, with cover paintings by Mike Okamoto. The original picture starred a pre-*Naked Gun* Leslie Nielson and featured the debut of Robbie the Robot.

NBM: The War is over in *Terry & the Pirates* #23, but Terry's reduced forces still have to contend with some Japanese hold-outs.

Ulysses Vol. 2 concludes Pichard's adaptation of Homer's immortal poem.

New England Comics: Ben Edlund and company present *The Tick's Giant Circus of the Mighty*, a one-shot *Marvel Universe*-type guide to the funny cast of *The Tick*. Also, issues #7-10 of *The Tick* will be collected into *The Tick Omnibus II: Thursday Ad Infinitum*. This colume features the Tick's attempts to stop the villain Chairface from writing his name on the moon!



Above: *Maggots in Color* from Bruce Hamilton.

Below: Tom Sutton cover to *Lorelei* #1.

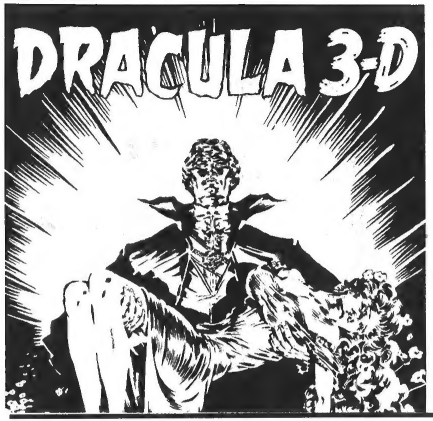
The Collected Paul the Samurai compiles the four-issue *Paul the Samurai* series in which the Tick's ally gets a job as a paper factory security guard, only to run into a bizarre science fiction plot.

Personality: The first title from Humor Comics, yet another new imprint from Friendly/Personality/Best/Celebrity what-have-you, is *Big Berd Vs. Arnold Schwarzenheimer*, a *Mad*-like battle between the half-human monster and the beloved friend of children everywhere. (But which is which?)

Personality's *Led Zeppelin* #1 begins a four-issue biography of the most popular band ever to have their records played backwards by fundamentalist preachers.

Celebrity Comics' *Kirk Vs. Picard* is a full-color comparison of the two





fictitious captains of the starship Enterprise.

Starwarp: Steve Roman's *Lorelei* #1 features a deadly, though curvaceous, spirit of vengeance who preys on those who prey on the weak.

3-D Zone: You can take your horror anyway you want it. *Dracula 3-D*, designed for a general audience, is the first 3-D comic adaptaion of Bram Stoker's novel, and it's about time! *Zombie 3-D*, which is more intense, features a cover by Robert Williams and interior stories by Williams, XNO, S. Clay Wilson, and the Pizz.

Chuck Roblin, who does the cover to *Dracula 3-D*, has adapted two Ray Bradbury stories, "The Toynbee Convector" and "Gotcha," in two paperback collections called *The Bradbury Chronicles*, to be released in 1992 by Bantam books. ●

COMICS BESTSELLERS—NOVEMBER

All figures from the November, 1991 Capital City *Internal Correspondence* newsletter. Figures represent direct market retail orders. Numbers in parentheses () represent a title's overall performance on a chart.

TOP TEN COMICS (TOTAL $$$)

(The comics with the highest orders in terms of $$$ spent)

1. Wolverine #50 ..... Marvel
2. Batman Vs. Predator Prestige #1 ..... DC
3. Robin II Set #2 ..... DC
4. Robin II Direct #2 ..... DC
5. Daredevil #300 ..... Marvel
6. Robin II Set #3 ..... DC
7. Batman/Dracula: Red Rain ..... DC
8. X-Men #4 ..... Marvel
9. Robin II Direct #3 ..... DC
10. Spider-Man #18 ..... Marvel

TOP TEN COMICS (CIRCULATION)

(The comics with the most issues ordered)

1. X-Men #4 ..... Marvel
2. Wolverine #50 ..... Marvel
3. Robin II Direct #2 ..... DC
4. X-Force #6 ..... Marvel
5. Uncanny X-Men #284 ..... Marvel
6. Robin II Direct #3 ..... DC
7. Daredevil #300 ..... Marvel
8. Spider-Man #18 ..... Marvel
9. Amazing Spider-Man #358 ..... Marvel
10. X-Factor #74 ..... Marvel

TOP TEN INDEPENDENT COMICS (CIRC.)

1 (19). Aliens: Genocide #1 ..... Dark Horse
2 (26). Terminator: Enemy Within #1 ..... Dark Horse
3 (32). Predator: Cold War #3 ..... Dark Horse
4 (74). Dark Horse Presents #54 ..... Dark Horse
5 (90). X-O Manowar #1 ..... Voyager
6 (92). Magnus Robot Fighter #9 ..... Voyager
7 (101). Solar: Man of the Atom #6 ..... Voyager
8 (108). Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #41 ..... Mirage
9 (115). Elfquest: KOTBW #8 ..... WaRP
10 (116). Tales of the Green Hornet #1 ..... NOW

TOP TEN BLACK & WHITE COMICS (CIRC.)

1 (74). Dark Horse Presents #56 ..... Dark Horse
2 (84). OMAC #3 ..... DC
3 (108). Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #41 ..... Mirage
4 (115). Elfquest: KOTBW #8 ..... WaRP
5 (150). Savage Sword of Conan #193 ..... Marvel
6 (162). Vampirella #2 ..... Dark Horse
7 (180). Cerebus #152 ..... Aardvark-Vanaheim
8 (192). Omaha #16 ..... Kitchen Sink
9 (194). Usagi Yojimbo #32 ..... Fantagraphics
10 (196). Robotech Sentinels Book II #1 ..... Malibu

TOP PUBLISHERS/MARKET SHARES

1. Marvel 41.59%
2. DC 31.20%
3. Dark Horse 8.13%
4. Innovation 1.26%
5. Malibu 1.08%
6. Valiant 1.08%
7. NOW 0.82%
8. Disney 0.82%
9. Fantagraphics 0.69%
10. Eclipse 0.61%

TOP TEN BOOKS ($$$)

1 (7). Batman/Dracula: Red Rain ..... DC
2 (21). Crossover Classics: Marvel/DC ..... Marvel
3 (23). Masterworks #19: Silver Surfer ..... Marvel
4 (25). Punisher: Blood on the Moors ..... Marvel
5 (27). Aliens: Tribes ..... Dark Horse
6 (35). Silver Surfer: Homecoming ..... Marvel
7 (37). Ghost Rider: Resurrected ..... Marvel
8 (40). Greatest 1960s Stories Ever told ..... DC
9 (42). All Star Archives #1 ..... DC
10 (50). 2112 Graphic Novel ..... Dark Horse

DC continues to regain its competitive edge with Marvel, but look for its share to drop next month as Marvel's price increases help it reap extra profits. *Dark Horse Presents* made #30 on the $$$ chart this month, an amazing performance for a black & white independent. Orders for the post-Todd McFarlane *Spider-Man* continue to slide, as do those for *X-Force* and *X-Men*.

January

COMING DISTRACTIONS!

AARDVARK—VANAHEIM

☐ **CEREBUS #154.**

☐ **CEREBUS: Church & State #23, 24 & 25.** Reprints *Cerebus* #73-75. By **Dave Sim.** [*B&W comics; $2.00 each*]

AC COMICS

☐ **FEMFORCE #45.**

☐ **JUNGLE GIRLS #3.**

ALL PRO

☐ **ALL PRO SPORTS COMICS #4: Steffi Graff, #5: Wayne Gretzky, & #6: Bonecrushers of Football.**

ALPHA PRODUCTIONS

☐ **BLOOD QUEST #1.** A reporter is turned into a vampire, and vows to use his powers for good. By **LaPoint & Laroux.** [*B&W comic; $1.95*]

☐ **NIGHTMARK #1.** This one-shot introduces Nightmark, who will soon star in his very own mini-series. By **Chris Mills.** [*B&W comic; $1.95*]

APOCALYPSE

☐ **COFFIN.** Collects the serial that appeared in *Toxic!* By **Mills, Mitchell & Morak.** [*Color comic; $3.95*]

APPLE COMICS

☐ **DAYS OF DARKNESS #2 (of 6).**

☐ **DESERT STORM JOURNAL #5.** To get past military restraints on journalists, Journal disguises himself as an Arab, only to be fired upon by the Americans. By **Don Lomax.** [*B&W comic; $2.75*]

☐ **FISH SHTICKS #3.**

☐ **VIETNAM JOURNAL: Tet '68 #4.**

ARCHIE

☐ **ARCHIE #398.**

☐ **ARCHIE'S DOUBLE DIGEST #58.**

☐ **BETTY & VERONICA #50.**

☐ **BETTY & VERONICA DIGEST #54.**

☐ **JUGHEAD #32.**

☐ **JUGHEAD'S DOUBLE DIGEST #75.**

☐ **JUGHEAD WITH ARCHIE DIGEST #110.**

☐ **MIGHTY MUTANIMALS #1.** Those crazy *Turtle* buddies return in a search for Jaguar's mother. By **Ciarrain & Ho.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **NEW LITTLE ARCHIE DIGEST #6.**

☐ **VERONICA #20.** Three stories, including one about Veronica's rival, Baroness Bibi. By **Ollerenshaw & Parent.** [*Color comic; $1.00*]

☐ **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #31.**

ARIA PRESS

☐ **A DISTANT SOIL #4.**

ARTLINE STUDIOS

☐ **ALLEY CAT #1.** A gymnast dresses as a super-hero as a gag, then becomes one for real. By **Decker & Lizana.** [*B&W comic; $2.25*]

☐ **BLACK BOW #2.**

☐ **SCALPEL #1.** A psychopathic vigilante. So what were you expecting, a psychopathic short order cook or something? [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

BALLANTINE BOOKS

☐ **GARFIELD #22: By the Pound.** By **Jim Davis** or someone like him. [*B&W softcover; $6.95; 128 pages*]

BLACKBIRD COMICS

☐ **TROPO #4.**

BRAVE NEW WORDS

☐ **OZ SQUAD #2.**

☐ **STINZ: Wartime & Wedding Bells Trade Paperback.** The first five issues of *Stinz*, along with a sketchbook and a map of Geisel Valley. By **Donna Barr.** [*B&W comic; $12.95; 144 pages*]

☐ **UBERDUB #3.**

☐ **VENI #1.** An extraterrestrial lawman crash-lands on a planet called Earth. By **Howard & Bendis.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

BREEZE COMICS

☐ **BLACK THUNDER #4.**

BUDGIE PRESS

☐ **ADVENTURES OF VITAL MAN #4.**

BURCHAM STUDIO

☐ **CHAMBER OF EVIL #1.** Bloody tales of Darkness by **Butch Burcham.** [*B&W comic; $2.95, $3.95 signed*]

☐ **DARK BLADE OF DRACULA #1.** Dark tales of bloodiness by **Butch Burcham.** [*B&W comic; $2.95, $3.95 signed*]

☐ **GRIM HEROES #1.** Butch blood of tale-iness By **Dark Burcham.** [*B&W comic; $2.95, $3.95 signed*]

☐ **MEGA HEROES #1.** Burcham blood of Butchiness by **Tale Dark.** [*B&W comic; $2.95, $3.95 signed*]

BURKE PUBLISHING

☐ **GREAT WARRIOR COMICS #1: Patton Vs. Rommel.** A look at the leaders of great conflicts throughout the ages, starting with "Old Blood 'n' Guts" and "The Desert Fox" (AKA the Peach's brother). [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

CALIBER PRESS

☐ **AIRWAVES #6.**

☐ **DEADKILLER.** One-shot collecting the "Deadkiller" serial from *Deadworld*. By **Garrett & McCaln.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]



John Byrne's *Next Men*: You know, that rhymes with something. . .

☐ **DIVAS #2.**

☐ **THE ELECTRIC SHARK.** In a world in which only paradoxes stand for truth and every important question is considered rhetorical (it sounds kind of neat until you imagine asking someone, "where's the john?"), a man is hired to search for the Electric Shark. What's the Electric Shark, you ask? Like we said, some questions have no answers. By **Chris Lanier.** [*B&W comic; $3.50*]

☐ **GUNS OF SHAR-PEI #2 (of 3).**

☐ **PLASMA BABY #3 (of 3).**

☐ **RANDOM THOUGHTS.** Collecting the *Caliber Presents* serial about a man seeking death in a world in death is illegal. So what do they do if you break it? Throw your carcass in jail? By **Csutoras & Gaudiano.** [*B&W comic; $3.50; 64 pages*]

☐ **SPUNKY TODD. . .THE PSYCHIC BOY.** A college student can read women's minds. Not that it helps his social life, mind you. By **Brian Michael Bendis.** [*B&W comic; $2.95; 40 pages*]

☐ **VIRAGE.** Pin-up art by **Dan Schaefer.** Includes Betty Page. Hey, how come you're not jumping up and down? [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ZONE CONTINUUM #1.** New science-fantasy series set in Zone 27, one of many worlds that may be destroyed. By **Bruce Zick.** [*B&W comic; $2.95, 4.95 signed; 32 pages, 40 pages signed*]

CALIBER/TOME PRESS

☐ **ART OF MUCHA.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **DANCE OF DEATH.** By **Hans Holbein.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **EREWHON.** Adapts Samuel Butler's science fiction story. By **Yaco & Torres.** [*B&W comic; $3.50; 48 pages*]

☐ **HENRY V #1 (of 3).** By **Dave Biafore.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **JASON & THE ARGONAUTS #6.**

☐ **SHERLOCK HOLMES: A Scandal in Bohemia.** Reprinting the *Cases of Sherlock Homes* series by **Dan & David Day.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

CATALAN

☐ **CREAM PUFF AND OTHER DELICACIES.** A look at the gay life by cartoonist **Ralf Konig.** [*B&W & Color softcover; $12.95; 80 pages*]

☐ **THE ROLLING STONES.** Master caricaturist **Sebastian Kruger** pays tribute to his favorite rock 'n' roll band. Text by **John Ullman.** [*Color softcover; $15.95; 80 pages*]

☐ **SHADOW OF LOVE.** From **Canossa & Baldazzini**, the creators of *Hurricane*: a series of sexy vignettes written by (surprise!) a woman. [*B&W softcover; $11.50; 64 pages*]

COMICO

☐ **ELEMENTALS #25.** Fathom and her lover join in the battle against the forces of Oblivion. [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ELEMENTALS SEX SPECIAL #2.**

☐ **SECRET OF THE DWARFS #1.** From the people behind the *Hobbit* graphic novel. And isn't it spelled "Dwarves?" By **Walsh & Wenzel.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

COMIC ZONE

☐ **EAGLE: The Dark Mirror Saga #2 (of 4).**

☐ **ILLUST-RATED CLAS-SEX #2.**

☐ **PSYCHO KILLERS #2.**

☐ **SEX IN THE SINEMA #2.**

COMIKAZE

☐ **COMIKAZE #3.**

CONTINUITY

☐ **ARMOR #15.** Scarlet, whose memory has been erased, searches for clues to her past. By **Stone, Veluto, & Nebres.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **BUCKY O'HARE #2.**

☐ **BUCKY O'HARE Limited Hardcover Graphic Novel.** Signed & numbered. By **Larry Hama & Michael Golden.** [*Color hardcover; $30; 48 pages*]

☐ **CYBERRAD VOL 2 #1.** Phase two of the "Cyberrad" saga begins as he sets out to find whoever's responsible for turning him into a machine. By **Stone & Bennett.** [*Color comic; $2.95 direct, $2.50 newsstand*]

☐ **MS. MYSTIC #12.**

DARK HORSE COMICS

☐ **ALIENS: Genocide #3 (of 4).**

☐ **CHEVAL NOIR #26.**

☐ **THE COMPLEAT ALIENS Hardcover limited edition.** *Every* Aliens comic story printed to date. By **various.** Not only that, but practically all of them sign it! [*Color & B&W hardcover; $99.95; 490 pages*]

☐ **DARK HORSE PRESENTS #58.**

☐ **DEADLINE U.S.A #3.**

☐ **NEXT MEN #1.** Continued from the pages of *Dark Horse Presents*. The Next Men escape from Project Next Men only to find themselves running for their lives in an "alien" world. By **John Byrne.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **PREDATOR: Bloody Sands of Time #1 (of 2).** A long-lost diary reveals that "World War I" was a more apt name than anyone could have known. By **Dan Barry** with **Chris Warner.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **PRIMAL: From the Cradle to the Grave.** Creators **Clive Barker, Dan Chichester, Erik Saltzgaber** and **John Saltzgaber** unleash the Riven, creatures that feed upon human fear. A lead-in to the upcoming *Primal* series. [*Color softcover; $9.95; 64 pages*]

☐ **TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS #1 (of 4).** Let's look in on a man who's convinced that everyone's watching him. By **Bourne & Allred. Cover by John Bolton.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **TERMINATOR: Enemy Within #3 (of 4).**

☐ **VAMPIRELLA #3.**

☐ **VENUS WARS #10.** Nothing stands in the way of Ishtar's Supertanks and the Aphrodian capital! By **Yoshikazu Yasuhiko.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

DC

☐ **ACTION COMICS #674.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #488.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **ANIMAL MAN #45.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **AQUAMAN #4.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **ARMAGEDDON: The Alien Agenda #4 (of 4).** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **BATMAN #475.** Scarface & the Ventriloquist return in a storyline that will be continued in *Detective Comics* #642. By **Grant & Breyfogle.** [*Color comic; 1.00; ships 1/21*]

☐ **BATMAN: GOTHAM NIGHTS #1 (of 4).** A comic series that shows the effect of Batman on the citizens of Gotham City. Presumably, it goes beyond having them point up at the Bat-Signal. By **Ostrander, Mitchell & ?** [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 1/14*]

☐ **BATMAN: LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #28.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **BATMAN: THE SUNDAY CLASSICS Limited Hardcover Edition.** Featuring a tipped-in plate with unpublished art by Jack Burnely. [*Color hardcover; $75.00; ships 1/14*]

☐ **BATMAN VS. PREDATOR #2 (of 4).** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **BLACK HOOD #4.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **THE BRAVE & THE BOLD #4 (of 6).** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **THE COMET #8.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **DEATHSTROKE, THE TERMINATOR #8.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **THE DEMON #21.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #641.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **DOCTOR FATE #37.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **DOOM PATROL #52.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **ELONGATED MAN: Europe '92 #3 (of 4).** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **FLASH #60.** While Flash and Power Girl battle the Last Resort, a neglected Connie is drawn to the sympathetic Chunk. By **William Messner-Loebs, Whigham, & Marzan, Jr.** [*Color comic; 1.00; ships 1/14*]

☐ **THE FLY #7.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **GREEN ARROW #57.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **GREEN LANTERN #22.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **THE GRIFFIN #5 (of 6).** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **THE HACKER FILES #3.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **HAWKWORLD #21.** [*ships 1/14*].

☐ **HELLBLAZER #51.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **JAGUAR #8.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA #60.** The Justice League reaches the conclusion of "Breakdowns." A major turning point in the history of the League. By **Giggen & DeMatteis, Maguire & Austin.** [*Color comic; 1.00; ships 1/21*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE #35.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY #6.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **LEGEND OF THE SHIELD #9.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **L.E.G.I.O.N. '92 #37.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #27.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **LOBO'S GREATEST HITS Trade Paperback.** Featuring all of Lobo's guest appearances from *Omega Men, Justice League,* and other titles. By **various.** [*Color softcover set; $12.95; ships 1/14*]

☐ **LOBO: The Last Czarnian Trade Paperback.** Reprints Lobo's debut series, plus some sketch pages, a pin-up, and an introduction by Robert Scheckley. Lobo kills, mutilates, and exterminates, but don't worry moms 'n' dads—it's all in good fun. By **Giffen, Grant & Bisley.** [*Color softcover; $9.95; ships 1/7*]

☐ **MY NAME IS CHAOS #1 (of 4).** Two brothers take different paths in quest for the super man. By **T. Veitch & Ridgway.** [*Color comic; $4.95; ships 1/7*]

☐ **NEW TITANS #84.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **OUTLAWS #7 (of 8).** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **QUESTION: Thunder Over the Abyss Trade Paperback.** Collects the storyline from *Question* #1-5. By **O'Neil, Cowan & Magyar.** [*Color softcover; $12.95; ships 1/21*]

☐ **RAGMAN #6 (of 8).** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **THE RAY #2.** [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 1/28*]

☐ **SANDMAN #36.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **SHADE, THE CHANGING MAN #21.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **SHADO: Song of the Dragon #1.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **THE SHADOW STRIKES! #29.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **SKULL & BONES #1.** A former Soviet soldier becomes Skull & Bones, the vigilante determined to destroy the Soviet government. By **Ed Hannigan.** [*Color comic; $4.95; ships 1/7*]

The Caped Crusader is just one of the denizens of the *Gotham Nights*.



☐ **STARMAN #44.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **STAR TREK #29.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION #29.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **SUICIDE SQUAD #62.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **SUPERMAN #65.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL #9.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **SWAMP THING #117.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **WARLORD #2 (of 6).** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **THE WEB #7.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **WHO'S WHO IN THE DC UNIVERSE #16.** Final issue. [*ships 1/7*]

PIRANHA PRESS

☐ **BEAUTIFUL STORIES FOR UGLY CHILDREN #25.**

☐ **MARS ON EARTH Graphic Novel.** The story of Mars, redneck supreme, told in a series of 2-3 page vignettes. By **Cardwell & G. Barr.** [*B&W softcover; $9.95*]

DEADLINE

☐ **DEADLINE #38.**

DELL

☐ **GIVE ME LIBERTY: An American Dream.** Dell's first graphic album reprints the series by **Frank Miller & Dave Gibbons.** [*Color softcover; $16.00; 208 pages*]

DISNEY

☐ **DISNEY ADVENTURES DIGEST #17.**

☐ **DONALD DUCK #23.**

☐ **UNCLE SCROOGE #265.**

☐ **WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES #570.** A classic story by **Carl Barks:** Donald becomes a mail carrier, and must deliver a valentine from Gladstone to Daisy. A special "posterette" is included in this issue. [*Color comic; $1.50*]

HOLLYWOOD COMICS

☐ **FINAL FANTASY #3 (of 4).**

DRAWN & QUARTERLY

☐ **PALOOKA-VILLE #3.**

☐ **YUMMY FUR #27.**

EC

☐ **HAUNT OF FEAR #5.**

Yes, a cover by Todd McFarlane. Or is it Bob Kane?



☐ **TALES FROM THE CRYPT #5.**

☐ **VAULT OF HORROR #6.**

ECLIPSE

☐ **DAVID CHELSEA IN LOVE #4 (of 4).**

☐ **MIRACLEMAN: The Apocrypha #2 (of 3).**

☐ **REVELATIONS Hardcover Graphic Novel.** By **Niles & Talaro.** [*Color hardcover; $24.95; 64 pages*]

☐ **STRAIGHT UP TO SEE THE SKY.** Regular hardcover edition. Written & illustrated by **Tim Truman.** [*B&W hardcover; $29.95; 128 pages*]

☐ **X-FARCE #1.** A parody of the book that held the record for the best-selling comic for a record short time. Cable TV and his crew fight crime. . .um, fight evil . .well, fight. By **Maus, Chin & Hanon.** Cover by Todd McFarlane. [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **THE YATTERING & JACK.** Clive Barker's tale adapted by **Steve Niles & John Bolton.** [*Color book; $7.95 softcover, 65.00 signed hardcover; 64 pages*]

FANTAGRAPHICS

☐ **BUTT BISCUIT #1.** A new comic with something to offend everyone. By **Williams & Couldron.** [*B&W comic; $2.25; 28 pages*]

☐ **CEREAL KILLINGS #1.** Various breakfast cereal mascots are being killed in this mystery, part of the the first comic by *Raw* and *Drawn & Quarterly* contributor **James Sturm.** [*B&W comic; $2.25; 28 pages*]

☐ **EIGHTBALL #6.**

☐ **LAUNDRYLAND #3.**

☐ **LOOSE TEETH #3.**

☐ **LOVE & ROCKETS #1: Third Printing.**

☐ **REAL GIRL #3.**

☐ **PRINCE VALIANT BOOK 14: Sword & Sorcery.** By **Hal Foster.** [*Color comic; $16.95; 48 pages*]

☐ **SCOTT RUSSO'S JIZZ #6.**

☐ **STICKBOY #1—3rd Printing.**

☐ **USAGI YOJIMBO #33.**

EROS

☐ **BAD MEAT #2.**

☐ **EROTIC FABLES & FAERIE TALES #2.**

☐ **IRONWOOD #9.**

☐ **YOUNGER MEN, BOLDER WOMEN #1.** Four tales of May-December lust by **Howard Lake & Art Wetherall.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 24 pages*]

MONSTER COMICS

☐ **THE HOLO BROTHERS #9 (of 10).**

☐ **KING KONG #6 (of 6).**

☐ **RAZORGUTS #2.**

FLEETWAY

☐ **2000 AD #768-772.**

FLEETWAY/QUALITY

☐ **CYBERCRUSH: ROBOTS IN REVOLT #5.**

☐ **DARE THE IMPOSSIBLE #2.**

☐ **DREDD RULES! #4.**

☐ **JUDGE DREDD CLASSICS #63.**

☐ **THE LAW OF DREDD #33.**

FRIENDLY/PERSONALITY

BEST COMICS

☐ **RESCUEMAN #3.**

CELEBRITY COMICS

☐ **BO JACKSON VS. MICHAEL JORDAN #1 (of 2)** Comparing two of today's most popular athletes. [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

FRIENDLY COMICS

☐ **BAMBI THE HUNTER #1 (of 5).** This is the *other* Bambi, and there's no Thumper in this adult series—unless you count verbs. By **Barry Blair.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **LEATHER & LACE: Undercover #1 (of 5).** Pam & Chris suspect that Velvet Black has returned with her clone army. [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **SAPPHIRE: City of Sin #1.** Sapphire & her pals find a lost city. By **Barry Blair.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **VAMPIRE'S KISS: The First Evil #1 (of 4)** Bianca rises from the dead to terrorize an island. By **Barry Blair.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **XXX-WOMEN: Clash of the XXX's #1 (of 3).** They meet Barry Blair's Climaxx! By **Barry Blair.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

PERSONALITY COMICS

☐ **BASEBALL SLUGGERS #1 (of 4): Ken Griffey, Jr.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **BEATLES #3 (of 4): George Harrison**

☐ **ORIGINAL CREW #4: Walter Koenig.**

☐ **MARTIAL ARTS MASTERS #1: Steven Seagal.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **NEW CREW #4: Levar Burton.**

☐ **SECRET AGENTS #3: Timothy Dalton.**

GENESIS WEST

☐ **LAST OF THE VIKING HEROES #11.**

GLADSTONE/DISNEY

☐ **CARL BARKS LIBRARY ALBUM #1: Walt Disney's Comics & Stories in Color.** The first in a joint project between the two companies that will reprint all 2541 ½ pages of **Carl Barks'** best work. By **Carl Barks.** [*Color softcover; $8.95*]

GRAPH-X

☐ **COM-X #1.** Anthology comic with more than a hint of the avante-garde.



Donald gets collected; *Captain Thunder* gets revived.

Stories include "Night of the Living Snowmen" and "The Fabulous Slime Brothers." [*B&W comic, $2.00*]

GREATER MERCURY COMICS

☐ **ASSASSIN FORCE #1.** Greater Mercury's newest team debuts with seven different cover versions of #1. Gee, where do you think they got that idea? Each one has a different seven-page origin of one of the heroes. The seven different subtitles, if you've bothered to read this far, are *Maxwell Faraday, Sting/Ray, Crimson Cougar, Grips, Death Hawk* and *Vengeance* In the main story, which will surely be good enough to read seven times over, the AF find themselves fighting a team of cyborgs. By **Silver & Collett.** [*Color comics; $2.50 each*]

☐ **CRIMSON COUGAR #2.**

☐ **GREATER MERCURY COMICS ACTION #10.**

☐ **GRIPS #11.**

☐ **"I" COME IN PEACE #2.**

☐ **VENGEANCE #2.**

VENUSIAN PRESS

☐ **AERIAL COMMAND SPECIAL #1.**

☐ **FRAJEEENA SPACIAL #1.**

☐ **SHACKLES #1.**

GREY MATER PRESS

☐ **COLLECTED SUBCONSCIOUS.** Cartoons by **Tim Egan.** [*B&W comic; $9.95*]

GREY PRODUCTIONS

☐ **KREMIN #2 & 3.**

GROUND ZERO GRAPHICS

☐ **SHADOW WALKER #4.**



HAMILTON COMICS

☐ **DREAD OF NIGHT IN COLOR #1.** Stories from the Hamilton horror titles are presented in color for the first time! By **various.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **DREAD OF NIGHT #4.**

☐ **GRAVE TALES #5.**

HARMONY

☐ **THE 70's: LIFE IN A DUMB DECADE.** Satirical look back on the most maligned of decades by cartoonist **Jim Ryan.** [*B&W softcover; $7.00; 64 pages*]

HARVEY COMICS

☐ **THE ADVENTURES OF FELIX THE CAT #1.** Classic Felix adventures by **Otto Messmer.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **CASPER GHOSTLAND #1.** New series with Casper & his friends. By **various.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **CASPER ENCHANTED TALES DIGEST #1.** By **various.** [*Color digest; $1.75*]

☐ **RICHIE RICH ADVENTURES #1.** [*Color comic; $1.75*]

☐ **RICHIE RICH CASH MONEY #1.** By **various.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **SAVED BY THE BELL: The series #1.** The kids check out the college of their dreams. By **DeCesare, Rosen & Selig.**[*Color comic; $1.25*]

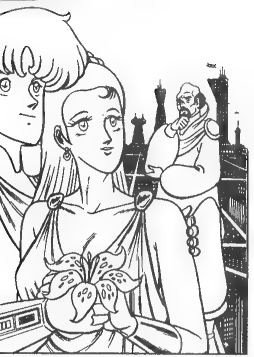
☐ **SPOOKY #3.**

☐ **TOM & JERRY ADVENTURES #1.** By **Carl Barks.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **WOODY WOODPECKER ADVENTURES #1.** By **Walter Lance** or someone working for him. [*Color comic; $1.25*]

HERO GRAPHICS

☐ **CAPTAIN THUNDER #1.** The Captain



Back to the past in *Robotech: Genesis*.

is on the verge of learning the truth behind how he become a wanted man. By **Roy & Dann Thomas, H. Simpson, & Cruz.** [*Color comic; $2.95*]

☐ **CHAMPIONS CLASSICS #2.**

☐ **FLARE ADVENTURES #2**

☐ **LADY ARCANE #2.**

IMAGINE THIS

☐ **SUPERIOR SEVEN #1.** Seven heroes, including Sloth (retractable claws), mass (alters density), and Eagle (sprouts wings). By **Fry, Henry, Nuckols & Hoehn.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

INNOVATION

☐ **INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE #3 (of 12).**

☐ **LOST IN SPACE ANNUAL #1.** In the first story, Dr. Smith sells Judy and Penny into white slavery. That wacky Dr. Smith! In the second, the good Doctor finally comes into contact with those guys who got him to sabotage the Jupiter 2. By **Miguel Ferrer** (who also "appears" as the villain), **Billy Mumy & various.** [*Color comic; $2.95; 44 pages*]

☐ **LOST IN SPACE #1—Special Edition.** Slightly revamped, improved version of #1. Didn't they first do this with *Close Encounters*? By **Bill Mumy & various.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **NIGHTMARES ON ELM STREET #5.** Neil Gordon awakens from his coma with warnings that Jacob the Dream Child is in Danger. By **Mangels, Rolo & Kyrssing.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **3X3 EYES #1 (Second Printing).**

☐ **VAMPIRE LESTAT Limited Edition Hardcover.** Signed by **Faye Perozich, Daerick Gross**, and Dave Campiti. [*Color hardcover; $59.95; 388 pages*]

JABBERWOCKY GRAPHIX

☐ **ELEGANT LADIES.** No nudity, just portraits of beautiful women in fantasy settings. By **Brad Foster.** [*B&W comic; $3.50; 24 pages*]

JADEMAN

☐ **BLOOD SWORD #43.**

☐ **BLOOD SWORD DYNASTY #30.** [*Color comic; $1.25; 36 pages*]

☐ **DRUNKEN FIST #43.**

☐ **FORCE OF BUDDHA'S PALM #43.**

☐ **IRON MARSHAL #20.**

☐ **ORIENTAL HEROES #43.**

JAL

☐ **STRIP ADVENTURES SPECIAL #1.** Complete storylines from *Brick Bradford, Buz Sawyer,* and *Captain Easy.* [*B&W comic; $6.50*]

JOE DEAGNON

☐ **PARANOID TALES OF NEUROSIS #4.**

JOHN BROWN

☐ **BLAST #8.**

☐ **ELECTRIC SOUP #11.**

KAMITE

☐ **NUMIDIAN FORCE #5 & 6.** The Numidian Force battles the Fallen Sons of Light, then face the invasion of Martu's forces. By **Brunson & various.** [*Color comics; $2.00 each*]

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

☐ **BASEBALL COMICS #2.** This issue features a **Will Elsner** story, plus a spooky tale by **Rand Holmes** and more. [*Color comic; $3.95*]

☐ **FLASH GORDON VOLUME 3: The Tides of War.** Flash Gordon dies thrice! By **Alex Raymond.** [*Color book; $21.95 softcover, $34.95 hardcover; 112 pages*]

☐ **GRATEFUL DEAD COMIX #4.**

☐ **SPIRIT #87.** The final issue reprints the last five Spirit stories by **Jules Feiffer, Wallace Wood,** and creator **Will Eisner.** Look for a new *Spirit* series in 1992, reprinting the very first *Spirit stories.* [*B&W comic; 2.00*]

LAST GASP

☐ **BILL GRIFFITH'S ZIPPY 1992 Calendar.** Yow! is it 1992 yet? (Don't worry. Last Gasp promises that this will arrive in stores in December.) [*$9.95*]

LEADBELLY PRODUCTIONS

☐ **INTERPLANETARY LIZARDS OF THE TEXAS PLAINS #3.**

LEADSLINGER COMICS

☐ **BOB 'N' DAVE #1.** Collects the **Dave King** strip from *National Lampoon.* [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ORDINARY STORIES.** Collects fantasy and horror stories by **Tim Conrad.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **TERROR #3 & 4.**

LETHARGIC

☐ **LETHARGIC COMICS, WEAKLY #8.**

MAGNUM COMICS

☐ **BOB FELLER #1 (of 3).** The early career of "Rapid Robert," one of baseball's greates pitchers. [*Color comic; $1.75*]

☐ **MICKEY MANTLE COMICS #2.**

MALIBU

ADVENTURE

☐ **ALIEN NATION: Public Enemy #2 (of 4).**

☐ **EXTREME: The Art of Rob Liefeld.** Collection of early art by the popular *X-Force* artist. Includes a checklist, trading cards (of course), and a special preview of his new Adventure comic, *Youngblood.* [*B&W & Color comic; $4.95*]

☐ **BLOOD OF THE APES #3 (of 4).**

☐ **PARANOIA #2 (of 6).**

☐ **PLANET OF THE APES #20.** It's all-out western action as Mojo and the simian "Wild Bunch" take on Dirty Hairy and his crew, Dolenz, Jones, Nesmith and Tork. I'm glad Maurice Evans isn't around to see this. by **Marshall, Wyman, & Pallot.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **RE-ANIMATOR #3 (of 3).**

AIRCEL

☐ **GALAXINA #2 (of 4).**

☐ **HARDBALL Trade Paperback.** Jan's a college student who really knows his way around the bases. He also plays baseball. By **Chuck Austen.** [*B&W comic; $12.95*]

☐ **LEATHER & LACE: Blood, Sex & Tears #4 (of 4).**

☐ **MARA #4.**

ETERNITY

☐ **DEMONIC TOYS #1 (of 4).** "What's ten inches tall, has a nasty attitude, and totes a machine gun?" I could think of a lot of fun answers, but the only one I can print in this magazine is: a pack of hell-spawned playthings. By **Campbell, Williams & Welch.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ELIMINATOR #1 (of 3).** The dystopian hero returns. By **Cunningham, Kirk, & Matthew.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **EVIL ERNIE #2 (of 5).**

☐ **GHOSTS OF DRACULA #5 (of 5).**

☐ **HARTE OF DARKNESS #4 (of 4).**

☐ **KID CANNIBAL #4 (of 4).**

☐ **NINJA HIGH SCHOOL #32.**

☐ **ROBOTECH: Genesis #1.** A look at the beginnings of the *Robotech* saga. By **John & Jason Waltrip.** [*Color comic; $2.95, $5.95 limited edition; 32 pages, 40 pages limited edition*]

☐ **ROBOTECH II: The Sentinels Book II #12.**

☐ **SOUTHERN SQUADRON: Freedom of Information Act #1.** The return of Australia's greatest super-hero team. By **deVries & Lumsden.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

PLATINUM EDITIONS

☐ **SMOKEHOUSE FIVE Limited Hardcover.** signed by **Sergio Aragones.** [*Color hardcover; $34.95; 48 pages*]

MANOS EDITORIAL

☐ **TUREY EL TAINO #23**

MARK FEARING

☐ **A LITTLE FABLE.** Franz Kafka's tale of a mouse is adapted by **Mark Fearing.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

MARVEL

☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #106.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **AMAZING FANTASY #15 MARVEL MILESTONE EDITION.** A complete reprint of Spider-Man's first appearance. By **Stan Lee & Steve Ditko.** [*Color comic; $2.95; ships 1/21*]

☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #360.** Cardiac tries to prevent Spidey from turning a white collar criminal over to the police. By **Michelinie, Marinnan, & Emberlin.** [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 1/14*]

☐ **AVENGERS #345.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **AVENGERS WEST COAST #80.** Chapter two of the 19-part "Operation Galactic Storm." The Avengers battle the Shi'ar. By **Thomas, Ross, & Dzon.** [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 1/7*]

☐ **BARBIE #15.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **BARBIE FASHION #15** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT COMIC BOOK #4.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **BOY'S RANCH Hardcover.** Collecting the famous six-issue cowboy series by **Joe Simon & Jack Kirby**, in which a group of young boys are willed a ranch. [*Color hardcover; $39.95; ships 1/14*]

☐ **BULLWINKLE & ROCKY Trade Paperback.** Collecting the best material from *Rocky & Bullwinkle* #1-10. Also featuring Dudley Do-right, Mr. Peabody & more. By **Manak, Colon & Milgrom.** [*Color softcover; $4.95; 96 pages; ships 1/7*]

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #398.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **CAPTAIN PLANET #5 & 6 (of 12).** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #254.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **CONAN SAGA # 59 & 60.** In #60: a tale from Conan's Hyrkanian days. He battles a cult that worships a beast-god. Hey, if these guys are supposed to be barbarians, how come all their words are so hard to spell? By **Thomas, S. Buscema, & Nebres.** [*B&W magazines; $2.25 each; ships 1/2 & 1/28*]



So you want some more, eh punks? Here's *Punisher War Zone.*

☐ **DAREDEVIL #302.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **DARKHAWK #13.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **DEATH'S HEAD II #1.** The new Death's head sets his sights on the *old* Death's Head. By **Abnett, Sharp, & Lanning.** [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 1/21*]

☐ **DEATHLOK #9.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **DEFENDERS OF DYNATRON CITY #1 & 2 (of 6).** Based on the upcoming Nintendo game series. A mad scientist creates a group of heroes to save Dynatron City. By **Purcell, Cirocco, & ?** [*Color comics; $1.25 each; ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **THE DESTROYER #4 (of 4).** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **DOCTOR STRANGE #39.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE #182.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **EXCALIBUR #48.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #361 & 362.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR Bookshelf Edition.** Collecting the three-part "New Fantastic Four" storyline in which the Hulk, Ghost Rider, Wolverine & Spider-Man replace the FF. By **Walt Simonson, Art Adams,** and **Thibert & Milgrom.** New cover by Adams. [*Color comic; $5.95; 80 pages; ships 1/7*]

☐ **GHOST RIDER #23.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **G.I. JOE #122.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #22.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **HOOK #3 & 4 (of 4).** [*ship 1/2 & 1/14*]

☐ **IDOL #1 (of 4).** The makers of an underwater adventure flick must save the world from renegade scientist. "Renegade"? Whatever happened to "Mad?" By **G. Jones, Randall, & Mattsson.** [*Color comic; $1.95; ships 1/21*]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #391.** By **David & Keown.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **IRON MAN #277 & 278.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **JAMES BOND, JR. #2 & 3.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **KID 'N PLAY #1 & 2.** The two rappers from *House Party* get their own series. In #1, they get into trouble for hitting on another girl's guy. By **Coye, Frazier, & Boyd.** [*Color comic; $1.25 each; ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #96, 97 & 98.** [*ship 1/2, 1/7 & 1/21*]

☐ **MARVEL TALES #259.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **MARVEL UNIVERSE—MASTER EDITION #16.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **MOON KNIGHT #36.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **THE 'NAM #66.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **NAMOR THE SUB-MARINER #24.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **NEW WARRIORS #20 & 21.** In #20: Marvel Boy and his father have a tragic confrontation which changes their lives forever. By **Nicieza, Bagley & Mahlstedt.** [*Color comics; $1.25 each; ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

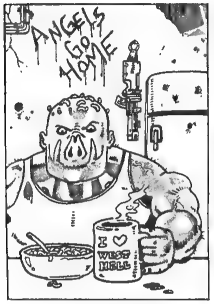
☐ **NFL SUPERPRO #6.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **OLYMPIANS #2.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **THE PIRATES OF DARK WATER #5 (of 6).** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **PUNISHER #61.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **PUNISHER WAR ZONE #1.** The Punisher's war against crime has now claimed a third title, featuring rotating creative teams handling multi-part stories. In this first six-part story by **Dixon, Romita, Jr., & Janson,** Microchip walks out on the Punisher. The Punisher then goes under-



***West Hell* (left) and *The Dream*.**

cover in the Mafia. [*Color comic; $2.25; ships 1/14*]

☐ **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #60.** Featuring a painted cover by **Michael Golden.** [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 1/28*]

☐ **QUASAR #32.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **QUASAR #1.** It's really *Quasar* #32, but renumbered for the newsstand market. [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #195.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **SHE-HULK #37.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **S.H.I.E.L.D. #33.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **SILVER SURFER #62 & 63.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **SLEEPWALKER #10.** Introducing the Dream Team, a government task force formed to capture Sleepwalker. . . and Rick. By **Budiansky, Blevins & Manley.** [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 1/14*]

☐ **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #185 & 186.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **SPIDER-MAN #20.** The Sinister Six continue to plot their revenge on Doctor Octopus. By **Erik Larsen.** [*Color comics; $1.75; ships 1/21*]

☐ **SPIDER-MAN: Torment Trade Paperback.** Reprinting the storyline from the best-selling *Spider-Man* #1-5. You've bought the comics—now read the story! By **Todd McFarlane.** [*Color softcover; $12.95; ships 1/28*]

☐ **THOR #444 & 445.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]

☐ **UNCANNY X-MEN #286.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH #2.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #86.** [*ships 1/7*]

☐ **WHAT IF? #35.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **WHAT THE?! #17.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **WOLVERINE #52.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **WONDER MAN #7.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **X-FACTOR #76.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **X-FORCE #8.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **X-MEN #6.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **X-MEN CLASSIC #68 & 69.** [*ship 1/2 & 1/28*]



EPIC

☐ **AKIRA #34.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **DREADLANDS #3 (of 4).** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **GROO THE WANDERER #87.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **HELLRAISER #11.** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **METROPOL #12.** [*ships 1/21*]

☐ **NIGHTBREED #14.** [*ships 1/28*]

☐ **THE TRANSFORMATION OF IKE GARUDA #2 (of 2).** [*ships 1/14*]

☐ **WEAVEWORLD #3 (of 3).** [*ships 1/28*]

MASSIVE COMICS GROUP

☐ **TALES FROM THE ANIVERSE #3.**

☐ **X-CAPADE #2.**

MILLENIUM PUBLISHING

☐ **DOC SAVAGE: THE MAN OF BRONZE #4 (of 4).**

☐ **H. P. LOVECRAFT'S CTHULHU #2.**

MILLER PUBLISHING

☐ **JONTAR RETURNS #4.**

☐ **TRIAL RUN #5.** Another issue of the anthology that publishes "contributors both young, known & unknown." By **Holman & Christopher.** [*B&W comic; 2.00*]

☐ **WILDMAN #11.**

MIRAGE STUDIOS

☐ **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #43.**

☐ **TURTLE SOUP #3 (of 4).**

MISTER PLANET

☐ **MISTER PLANET #7.**

☐ **TWILIGHT THEATER: Caretaker of Dreams #2.**

☐ **WEST HELL #1.** In this urban parable, a demon is upset when angels start moving in to his beloved city. Comes with an audio picture-disc with the voices of the cast and some rock 'n' roll. By **Cheff & Caravaggi.** [*B&W comic; $3.25*]

MOCKING BIRD STUDIOS

☐ **THE DREAM #1.** It's 2187, and the Fourth World War has left the planet bare. But before peace can be attained, good must win over evil in a final conflict. Plus a back-up tale, "They Called Him Evil." [*B&W comic, $2.50*]

MODERN KNIGHTS COMICS

☐ **DANZOR THE PEACE KEEPER #2.**

☐ **DREAMKEEP #2.**

M-PRINT GRAPHICS

☐ **CREATURE FEATURES #1.** New antholgy featuring four horror stories per issue. This issue: a psychological trip across America with James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, and an open house in Hell. By **Tim Tyler & various.** [*B&W comic; $2.75; 32 pages*]

MU PRESS

☐ **CHAMPION OF KATARA #1.** The adventures of a pacifistic lion who cast in the role of savior of a world. By **Chuck Melville.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **THE DESERT PEACH: Politics, Plots, & Puppies.** Oh Dear! It's issues #4-6 of *Desert Peach*, and a new 20-page story about the Peach's brother, Erwin Rommel. By **Donna Barr.** [*B&W softcover; $9.95; 128 pages*]

☐ **THE FURKINDRED #1: Otter Madness.** The return of the "shared world" of anthropomorphic beings (most people call 'em "funny animals"). Among the stories: A radio station manned by otters. By **various.** [*B&W softcover; $6.95; 104 pages*]

☐ **NORB COLLECTION.** Collects the strip by **Daniel Pinkwater** and political cartoonist **Tony Auth.** It's the adventures of an eccentric old man, his young next door neighbor, and their pet mastadon. [*B&W softcover; $8.85; 120 pages*]

☐ **RHUDIPRRT, PRINCE OF FUR #7.**

MUSIC CITY COMICS

☐ **TITAN #5.** Titan confronts a creature that's a werewolf like him, but from the future! By **John Jordon.** [*B&W & Color comic; $1.95*]

MYSTERY GRAPHIX PRESS

☐ **MIDNIGHT SCREAM #2.**

MIND'S PLAY

☐ **MIND'S PLAY #7.**

NBM

☐ **WASH TUBBS & CAPTAIN EASY Volume 18. Roy Crane's** last work on the strip before he moved to *Buz Sawyer.* [*$18.95 softcover, $35.00 hardcover; 224 pages*]

☐ **MIDNIGHT SCREAMS #2.**

NEW ENGLAND COMICS

☐ **THE CHROMA-TICK Special Edition #1.** Color "prestige" format reprint of *Tick* #1 with 13 extra pages of interviews, posters, cards and more. By **Ben Edlund.** [*Color comic; $3.95; 40 pages*]

NEW VOICE COMICS

☐ **THE NEW DIGGERS #1.** Five archeology students unwittingly unleash the evil Greyhart, but also gain super-powers to fight him. By **Keeter, Corrigan, Neel & Dorne.** [*B&W comic; $2.25*]

NIGHT WYND ENTERPRISES

☐ **CHINA SEA #4 (of 4).**

☐ **DRAGONFIRE #2 (of 4).**

☐ **ELFHEIM #4 (of 4).**

☐ **KIMURA #4 (of 4).**

☐ **STARDUSTERS #4 (of 4).**

☐ **STRATONAUT #3 (of 4).**

NORTHSTAR COMICS

☐ **LEATHERFACE #6.**

☐ **SHERLOCK HOLMES #1.** A complete text of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Speckled Band," illustrated by **David & Dan Day.** Haven't you ever wondered, though, how a famous British author wound up with a middle name like "Conan?" [*B&W comic; $2.25; 32 pages*]

NOSE COMICS

☐ **TOXINE #1 & 2.** Welcome to the post-apocalyptic world of Toxine, a sexy 'n' tough-as-nails heroine. By **Roger Licot.** [*B&W comic; $3.00*]

NOW COMICS

☐ **GREEN HORNET #7.**

☐ **MARRIED: WITH CHILDREN #7.**

☐ **REAL GHOSTBUSTERS #5.**

☐ **TALES OF THE GREEN HORNET #3.**

☐ **TWILIGHT ZONE #5.**

OK COMICS

☐ **HEROS #1 Signed Edition.** Signed & numbered by **Lonnie James Gross,** who can hopefully spell his own name better than he can spell "heroes." [*B&W comic; $3.50*]

PAGE ONE, INC

☐ **COMIC RELIEF #33.**

PAISANO PUBLISHING

☐ **BIFF BANG POW #2.**

PICTUREBOX PUBLISHING

☐ **FRONTIER.** Law & order breaks down as farmers try to establish a colony on an alien planet. By **Paul Duncan, Steve Pugh,** plus another story by **Gordon Fraser & Niel Bushnell.** [*B&W comic; $5.95*]

☐ **OVER THE EDGE #4.**

POST MAYHEM

☐ **AGENCY FILES #2.**

☐ **THE FACE #2.**

☐ **FOURTH GENERATION #2.**

☐ **SPARK #2.**

☐ **TOKYO BAY #2.**

☐ **VICTORY #2.**

PURE IMAGINATION

☐ **JACK KIRBY'S GREATEST HITS VOL 1: Pre-War Vintage.** The early comic book and strip work of one of comics' greatest. [*B&W & Color softcover; $19.95; 112 pages*]

PUTNAM

☐ **GARFIELD DISCOVERS AMERICA.** On a colonial adventure, Garfield discovers a new land. The mischievious feline soon spreads slavery and disease throughout it. By **A Machine.** [*B&W comic; $9.95; 32 pages*]

R. SUSOR PUBLICATIONS

☐ **TWIN EARTHS #5 (Dailies).** Reprint of the '50s science fiction comic strip, featuring Earth's twin planet, which is 92% female and the Jan & Dean song goes, "11½ girls for every boy." By **Lebeck & McWilliams.** [*B&W magazine; $5.95; 80 pages*]

REVOLUTIONARY COMICS

☐ **BASEBALL LEGENDS #1: Babe Ruth.** Featuring an unauthorized biography of the Sultan of Swat." Right. As if a guy who died in 1948 could authorize a biography anyway. By **Shapiro & McMahon.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]]

☐ **BASEBALL SUPERSTARS #3: Ken Griffey, Jr..**

☐ **THE BEATLES EXPERIENCE #7 (of 8).**

☐ **HARD ROCK COMICS #1.** With help from "a source close to the band in their beginnings, **Sanford & Pentzer** present a look at "Metallica: The Early Years." [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ROCK & ROLL COMICS #45: The Grateful Dead Part One.**

REBEL STUDIOS

☐ **EO #1.** Science fiction adventure series confronting the power of sexual energy. I can't figure out whether it's in black & white or in color, though. By **Henkel & T. Vigil.** [*Comic; $2.95; 28 pages*]

☐ **FAUST ACT ONE—Rebel Edition.** The original Faust tales by **Quinn & Vigil,** with new supplementary material. [*B&W comic; $2.25; 32 pages*]

☐ **FAUST #9.**

RIP OFF PRESS

☐ **DIK SKYCAP #2.**

☐ **KINKY KLITT #1.** The adventures of Kinky, who was previously seen in *Komik Fantasies.* By **Preston.** [*B&W comic; $2.95; 28 pages*]

☐ **LIPSTICK #1.** A teenage girl breaks up with her boyfriend and enters the bittersweet world of teenage sex. By **Raevyn.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 36 pages*]

☐ **SAVAGE HENRY #19.**

☐ **STRIPS BOOK ONE Trade Paperback.** Collects the first four issues of the exploits of would-be college romeo Zack. By **Chuck Austen.** [*B&W softcover; $14.95; 128 pages*]

SATORI SOUP PUBLISHING

☐ **CAT 3 #3.**

☐ **GRIND #1.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

SHUNGA COMIX

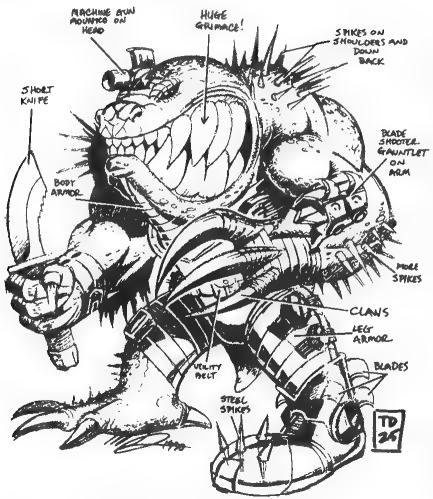
☐ **HONOR NEEZE AND HER NAUGHTY NURSES #2.**

☐ **SUSHI #8.**

SIDE SHOW

☐ **McGOON #1.** McGoon, the little man with the big nose, is the most naive man alive. From **Jim Ridings,** the creator of *The Fat Family.* [*B&W comic; $1.95*]

SLAVE LABOR



***Bone Saw*: All prepared for battle . . . except for that other shoe.**

☐ **BILL THE CLOWN.** The most popular clown in America snaps when a young girl cries at the sight of him. By **Vado & Nixey.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **OBLIVION CITY #7.**

☐ **SLAVE LABOR STORIES #2.**

ST MARTIN'S PRESS

☐ **HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN.** By **Mike Peters.** [*B&W comic; $6.95; 128 pages*]

STUDIO 91 CREATIONS

☐ **MOGOBI DESERT RATS #3.**

TITAN

☐ **MAURETANIA #13.**

TRAGEDY STRIKES PRESS

☐ **THE CHEESE HEADS #3.**

TUNDRA

☐ **BONE SAW VOLUME ONE.** An anthology that brings new meaning to the term "cutting edge." Includes "Slave Cylinder" by **O'Barr, Bergin & Buto,** plus other tales by **Various.** [*B&W & Color softcover; $14.95; 144 pages*]

☐ **COBALT 60 VOLUME ONE.** A strange, post apocalyptic adventure by **Mark Bode & Larry Todd,** based on characters created by **Vaughn Bode.** [*Color softcover; $4.95; 48 pages*]

☐ **THE CROW VOLUME ONE (of 3).** After a long absence **Jim O'Barr's** strange vigilante returns in a series reprinting all of his adventures in color. Volume Three will present the never-before seen conclusion. [*Color softcover; $4.95; 64 pages*]

☐ **THE JAM #1—Color Edition.** The acclaimed super-hero spoof by **Bernie Mireault,** in color for the first time. [*Color comic; $2.95; 32 pages*]

☐ **TABOO ESPECIAL #1.** A special edition with work by **Wendy Snow-Lang, Eddie Campbell Scott McLoud, Moebius** and various. [*B&W softcover; $14.95; 152 pages*]

☐ **TUNDRA SKETCHBOOK SERIES #9: Michael Dooney.**

UNDERGROUND COMICS

☐ **OMEGA KNIGHTS #3.**

UNITED FANTASY NETWORKS

☐ **PALADIN #1.** Christian, a knight from the past, follows an evil wizard into the 20th Century. Gatefold cover with logo printed in metallic ink. [*Color comic; $1.95; 28 pages*]

VALIANT/VOYAGER

☐ **BEST OF TUROK VOLUME 1.** The stone age adventures of Turok, an Indian trapped in a land of dinosaurs. Original Gold Key stories illustrated by **Alberto Giolitti.** [*Color comic; $4.95; 48 pages*]

☐ **HARBINGER #4.**

☐ **MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER #11.**

☐ **MAGNUS: Steel Nation Volumes 1 & 2.** These books collect two issues each of *Magnus* #1-4, with some extra material. [*Color comic; $5.95; 64 pages*]

☐ **RAI #2.**

☐ **SOLAR, MAN OF THE ATOM #8.**

☐ **VINTAGE MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER #4 (of 4).**

☐ **WWF BATTLEMANIA #8.**

☐ **X—O MANOWAR #3.**

VISUAL IMAGINATION

☐ **SPACE JUNKK #2.**

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

☐ **CRYING FREEMAN: Shades of Death Part One.** The first of three volumes collecting *Crying Freeman Book 2.* By **Koike & Ikegami.** [*B&W softcover; $14.95; 192 pages*]

☐ **CRYING FREEMAN PART THREE #9 (of 10).**

☐ **MIDNIGHT EYE: Goku, Private Investigator #5 (of 6).**

☐ **SILENT MOBIUS Part II #2 (of 5).**

VORTEX

☐ **NASCAR ADVENTURES #4: Davey Allison.**

☐ **LEGENDS OF NASCAR #9: Rusty Wallace.**

☐ **MISTER X VOL 2 #18.**

☐ **NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS #3.**

WARNER

☐ **EARTHTOONS: The First Book of Eco-Humor.** *Punch* cartoonist **Stan Eales** mocks the not-so funny ecology, meat eaters, and even the green movement. [*Color softcover; $9.99; 112 pages*]

WARP GRAPHICS

☐ **ELFQUEST: Kings of the Broken Wheel #9.**

WORLD WAR THREE

☐ **WORLD WAR THREE ILLUSTRATED #15.** Another issue of "*The* original political comic book of the '80s and '90s." By **Kuper, Tobocman & various.** [*B&W comic; $3.00*]

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THE QUEEN OF COMICS

by Charles S. Novinskie

The year was 1941; Roosevelt was president, *Citizen Kane*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *The Maltese Falcon*, and the Marx Brothers' *The Big Store* opened on the silver screen. It was also the year in which Americans were headed towards a date "which will live in infamy." And through it all was also the period of time that later became known as the Golden Age of Comics.

Superman was firmly entrenched in American society when psychologist William Moulton Marston, under the pen name of Charles Moulton, created the Wonder Woman using a blend of legend and mythology. In fact, Wonder Woman may have been the first comic book character to use greek mythology in the guise of the superhero genre; that, and her appeal to solve the wrongs of the world with calm reasoning and understanding, may be the enduring qualities that have enabled the *Wonder Woman* comic to long outlive many other titles.

Dan Thorsland, the new editor on the *Wonder Woman* comic, summed it up this way: "Wonder Woman is not only one of the few female superheroes around but she is also one of the few super-heroes that has a truly good reason, a noble reason, for existing."

One of the things that really sets Wonder Woman apart from other super-heroes is that she comes from a better place. Wonder Woman has come to a man's world in an attempt to show us a better way to live. This theme pretty much runs through her entire history and it's no accident that the place she comes from is run by women.

No one will ever truly know if the times dictated Moulton's desire to create the perfect female character but it is interesting to note that he created a perfect society in Paradise Island.

Mythological Origins

According to Greek mythology, "Amazon" describes a race of warlike women from Asia Minor. It seems as if every culture had its own version of Amazons, with tales ranging from the continents of Asia and Africa, throughout the Americans, and of course, Greece. The governing body, or powers that be, always consisted of a queen who ruled over a society of warrior women.

Queen Hippolyte, mother of Princess Diana, founded Paradise Island after freeing the Amazons from slavery at the hands of Hercules. In return for the help provided by the Goddess Aphrodite, Queen Hippolyte promised to build a new world; a world free of ills and wars—a world free of men. As long as this race of wonder women remained on Paradise Island they were granted eternal life.

An invisible plane, a magic golden lasso and bullet-dodging bracelets were just a few of the tools that Princess Diana employed in her quest to right the wrongs of man. Many of those tools were steeped in legend: the bracelets were a symbol of their freedom from captivity by men. Others, such as the invisible or glass plane, were products of the writer's imagination.

George Perez did a superb job of researching the mythological aspects of the character and in re-creating Wonder Woman he provided readers with one of the few modern reinterpretations of an older character that really works.

Feminist Views?

There is no mistaking that Charles Moulton was a supporter of the feminist movement; his early stories were rich in strong, supportive female characters. Some even argued that Wonder Woman was the embodiment of the feminist movement during the sixties and the seventies. It is felt, though, that Wonder Woman could be better characterized as a humanist rather than a feminist. a quick glance of any issue of *Wonder Woman* usually finds Wonder Woman developing relationships with or making friends with the people she tries to help out.

Wonder Woman is rich with supporting cast, in particular, female supportive cast. Rather than portraying women in stereotypical fashion, the *Wonder Woman* title portrays women as self assertive and strong willed. Dan Thorsland was quick to point out that quotas aren't put concerning the number of women that have to appear in the book.

Mail to the comic has shown that readers have responded favorably to the humanist views portrayed in the book. Thorsland noted, "while we're not out to alienate the male readers with our large female supportive cast it is important that women have someone to look up to. And definitely more young women are reading comics today." One also quickly notes that the supporting cast has been multi-ethnic, which is a nice touch when one remembers that Wonder Woman is only visiting our society.

ALSO:

THE WONDER YEARS

Richard Howell on Wonder Woman

PAGE 36





Cover to *Wonder Woman* #62, George Perez's last issue.

Jill Thompson, current penciller on *Wonder Woman*, enjoys the mythological aspects of Wonder Woman and feels that, "it gives the book a fairy tale feel to it." Thompson feels that today's female readers are overgeneralized when it comes to their likes and dislikes in comic reading habits. "I think a lot of people today cut female readers short when they say we don't like any stories with violence, unless of course I'm one of the the weirder female readers on the face of the earth. I'm not offended by violence in comics. What bothers me is the perception that stories for women have to be geared towards nice, thinking type of stories."

Thompson added that one of the nice aspects about the Wonder Woman as re-created by Perez was that, "this Wonder Woman had a lot more innocence and in that respect the reader could make some interesting observations about the world through the eye of Wonder Woman. Because she was a stranger coming from a supposedly better place, she could point out things in our society that needed to be pointed out and changed."

Gods No More?

The War of the Gods crossover series will have some interesting ramifications of Princess Diana. Creative-wise, issue #62 will be the last issue of *Wonder Woman* for George Perez. Issue #62 will be a follow up to the *War of the Gods* series and will be written and pencilled by George Perez. In essence, the issue will be Perez's farewell to the character.

Concerning the consequences of the *War of the Gods*, the resolve of the series will be, as editor Dan Thorsland put it, "no more Zeus over for tea stories." All of the pantheons are going to look around and see all of the trouble that they've caused and will decide to leave. It will put Diana in a situation not unlike contemporary Christians. She might pray to the Gods but she will have to wonder whether or not they're listening.

"The Gods are very upset with mankind and Wonder Woman because she chose to live amongst them," Thorsland added, "because of this," Wonder Woman will have to use guile, wit and trickery when dealing with the Gods. In one instance, Wonder Woman will be forced to trick a God into giving her the ability to disguise herself, allowing her to enter a foreign country undetected. To an extent, this will allow us to re-introduce the alter ego of Diana Prince."

New Beginnings

As of issue #63, William Messner-Loebs, writer on the *Flash* and *Dr. Fate*, will be taking over the series. Tom Peyer, former editor on *Wonder Woman*, had the job of picking Bill as the new writer on the series. "I felt that Loebs was the perfect choice for the book after reading his crossover of the *War of the Gods* in *Dr. Fate*. I thought that he handled the scenes with Wonder Woman perfectly. Bill had her character spot on, especially the dialogue. Not everyone has an affinity for writing *Wonder Woman*."

Wonder Woman stories under Perez have been incredibly sweeping and of epic proportions with a vest population of characters. With Bill, there will be more down to earth, shorter stories focusing on fewer characters. "Bill is very good about writing small stories about individual people in real settings," said Peyer. "What we will be doing," Thorsland added, "is presenting a number of one-issue stories in an attempt to make the book more accessible to new readers. Wonder Woman will also be interacting more within the DC universe. We'll also see a lot of team-ups and she will be playing a much bigger role, since she is this noble warrior that has to act when she sees an injustice being done."

Loebs looks at Wonder Woman as part of not only the Paradise Island mythos but also that of Greek mythology and in his eyes they're not the same. "It will be interesting and challenging to write stories about a hero that isn't motivated by revenge, fear or anger." Loebs contented, "Next to Superman, Wonder Woman is the most idealistic character we have, with Superman's ideas being a little more diffuse."

Brian Bolland, (who rendered the amazing cover for this month's issue), will be taking over as the cover artist on *Wonder Woman*. Brian's approach to both his line work as well as his painted material adds an extra dimension to his cover work that is a rarity today.

Art Team Supreme

The art team will remain the same on *Wonder Woman* with Jill Thompson penciling and Romeo Tanghal providing the inks. As one would imagine, over the span of fifty years, Wonder Woman has undergone quite a few changes artistically. In fact, Wonder Woman first appeared wearing a fashionable skirt in *Sensation Comics* as rendered by H.G. Peters.

Even Princess Diana's physical appearance has changed over the years with Thompson arguably providing the most accurate rendition to date keeping in mind Princess Diana's Greek/Amazon origins. Jill has actually designed her own Wonder Woman. She has a new face and a new body type; the costume hangs differently but, it all works; it all makes perfect sense.

Thompson recalls the first sample pages she drew for the series, "when I first drew her I didn't make her large enough. I drew her with human proportions. The note I received back with my sample pages was, 'she's a six foot woman—remember to draw her that way.' As far as the physical changes were concerned, they just sort of evolved. I started thinking about her as I drew her and it hit me that she was Greek. I thought back to some of the girls that I went to school with that were Greek and I remembered their features. They were different in the fact that their faces were more rounded and that they had turned up noses and fuller lips. For the most part, they had dark, curly hair, Italian hair if you will." Thompson continued to experiment with the character until she found a sketch that she liked and was comfortable with drawing.

"Basically," Thompson concluded, "Wonder Woman is a six foot woman—not a six foot model. We need to see women drawn more realistically in comics. Wonder Woman is supposed to slug it out with guys every once in awhile; she's not supposed to be wasp waisted with twig arms and Jane Mansfield breasts. How can someone fitting that physical description walk up to a guy, punch him out, and then expect him to feel it?"

New writer William Messner-Loebs' first issue of *Wonder Woman*.



Baseball, Hotdogs . . . Wonder Woman?

Plans are in the works for Wonder Woman to get involved in coaching a girls softball team for Vanessa and her friends. "Half way through the game everyone realizes that Wonder Woman doesn't know the first thing about baseball. While everyone is dealing with this they realize that the field is haunted by the ghosts of a dead black baseball player and the person that murdered him. It will be up to Wonder Woman to find a way to release the two spirits, and at the same time, hopefully, it will be able to touch upon the fact that there were some great ball players in the early Negro-League."

Wonder Woman will also eat a hot dog for the first time. Loebs has actually gained a vast knowledge of Greek culture from his work on *Epicurus the Sage*. "I think there is a lot of generalization going on and it's easy to say that Wonder Woman is a vegetarian." Loebs sees it as just the opposite. "After all, Wonder Woman was named after the Goddess of the Hunt. But, and this is a big but, Princess Diana is subjected to American culture. Some people in England won't eat our steaks because to them they taste like mucus. Someone that is used to eating raw meat out in the field might react in a humorous way to what we call meat in a hot dog."

Meals on Wheels

One real world event will be DC's involvement with the Meals on Wheels program in New York City. DC will be underwriting a city block in New York City that will receive Meals on Wheels in the name of Wonder Woman. Events planned in Wonder Woman will tie in nicely with the event. As it turns out, Bill Loebs was involved with a Detroit chapter of Meals on

WONDER WOMAN

Wheels and helped out with delivering meals during the Thanksgiving and Easter holidays. The *Wonder Woman* comic will mirror real world events as they relate to Wonder Women helping other people.

Bill Loebs stated, "I'm in favor of people-helping-people type of stories and I think Wonder Woman will do well emphazing the positive aspects of being a human much more so than the revenge and violence thems that most comics revolve around.

"Still in the planning stages," said, is "a story involving Diana delivering Meals on Wheels to a large apartment complex in Boston. The story will revolve around the effect it will have on the impoverished people that live in the complex. Along the way the people will be drawn into a mystery that Diana will have to solve."

Loeb's Wonder Woman-Year One

The way Bill Loebs sees it, taking into account Perez's recreation of the character, Wonder Woman is around twenty-two years old and has only been in the man's world, our world, for about two years. "Being that, she's still relatively new as to understanding how the outside world works. I think that we can keep that sense of newness for a couple of years.

"I'll only be taking elements from the early series that I really liked," though Loebs noted that, in his opinion, "Perez is one of the first people to do anything of interest with Wonder Woman in the past thirty years.

"I sat down and read as many stories from the forties as I could find and I must admit that in reading the older stories in a big chunk like I did I found myself quite charmed by them." Bill noted that, "most of the women I spoke with remembered fondly the early stories.

"I found that we tend to think of Wonder Woman as being an unbroken line from those early stories up to the late '60s. After that it seems as if what was lost was Wonder Woman's role as an active participant in the stories. In trying to make her the perfect woman and having her embody every principle of feminity she became passive—and I think that that is the last thing she should be."

In reading the early stories one of the things that struck Bill as being odd was the fact that she talked about being against violence because that was part of a man's game. One has to keep in mind that, in fact, Wonder Woman comes from a society that is supposedly better, and yet the best game they have is to shoot bullets at each other and reflect them with their bracelets. "That," Bill state, "strikes me as funny.

"I think what I like about Wonder Woman is the element of risk-taking in the sense of the real enjoyment she gets in the physical activity; we haven't seen much of that lately. Whereas she wouldn't be the first person to go into a bar and knock people out with her fists, she would be the first person to walk out onto a ledge to rescue a baby bird, and maybe even more apropos, she would even be willing to get into a foreign country to save her worst enemy from the threat of torture and death because it's the right thing to do."

The first year of the series, under the direction of Loebs, will weigh heavily towards single issue stories with the development of some extended plotlines. Since the character has been fairly well entrenched in Boston, Wonder Woman will be staying there for the foreseeable future, as will most of her current supporting cast members. After a long run of epic tales and long running plot threads Loebs felt that it was time to balance out the book. "One of the roles that Wonder Woman has played historically was that of a guide, so I thought it would be wonderful if she had a young woman around to give guidance to. I'm trying to bring Vanessa into the storyline as sort of a companion and adventurer rather than a costumed sidestick. That's where the idea for Diana coaching Vanessa's softball

Below and facing: Two pages from *Wonder Woman Special* #1, coming in March.







The Cheetah has been Wonder Woman's most durable opponent...

team came from."

Readers can also expect to see big things from Ed Indelicato. Many readers saw a rivalry or even a sense of sexual tension between Ed and Diana. "It seemed to me," Loebs noted, "that the readers were actually implying much more than Perez actually had written into the stories. It seemed to me that if enough people were picking up on this that maybe that's the direction we should head in. I'm hoping to develop an almost sort of Katherine Hepburn/Spencer Tracy type of relationship between the two."

Loebs hopes to make Indelicato a little more rounded a character by bringing him out of the cop world and loosening him up a bit by adding a sense of humor that hopefully will enable him to meet one a more equal footing with Diana. Indelicato is that hardboiled sort of character that, once on the trail, won't be stopped and doesn't care how many cars and storefronts he destroys in the process.

And that's just fine with Ed's new partner, Jasper. Jasper will be looking up to Indelicato for inspiration, sort of like, "you're an undercover cop, teach me everything you know." Right now not much is known about Jasper, other than the fact that Loebs describes him as "cool, by the book, and Episcopalian."

With the conclusion of the *War of the Gods* storyline there is the question as to whether or nor Indelicato should be allowed to remain on the force. Because of the amount of mind control and such involved within the *War of the Gods* storyline there will exist a sort of blanket amnesty from Washington that will enable Indelicato and many others to retain their jobs.

One of the storylines that will help develop the Hepburn/Tracy magic between Ed and Diana will be a tale involving an adventure in a foreign country in which they will be forced to rely upon each other. The storyline will involve the Cheetah, who is captured during her attempt to steal something in a foreign country that is less than kind to women. Most people will assume that the Cheetah is already dead and that the world will be better off because of it. Diana, being Diana, decides to rush off to rescue the Cheetah and of course, Indelicato tags along to help out. Loebs envisions it as, "sort of a James Bond adventure. The adventure will team up Wonder Woman with Deathstroke after she appeals to the Titans for help. All of this will take place after the Jericho Saga so Deathstroke won't be in the best of moods."

Supporting Cast Galore

"One of the plot threads that George (Perez) asked me to follow up on and that he didn't have time to get around to was the wedding of Etta Candy and Steve Trevor." Loebs will be planning a special wedding issue and Diana will find herself attending a bachelor party. Once again, Diana wil be faced with the reality of dealing with customs unfamiliar to her.

Longtime readers will remember Etta Candy as one of the original Holliday Girls of Holliday College. Etta was a stereotypical heavy girl, for some reason, loved the phrase "woo, woo," and had a voracious appetite for chocolates. Loebs was quick to comment that one of the more interesting things Perez did, "was to put Etta in the Air Force and make her a more realistic character by not portraying her as such a short, plump character with an over-abiding interest in pure simple carbohydrates. He also gave her an interest in Steve."

Steve is also undergoing some interesting changes in the fact that he will be leaving the Air Force and will instead be running a consulting service that will investigate bizarre and paranormal events. It will also be an eloquent way of getting Diana involved with the bizzare storylines.

Ginger Mayer, Myndi's sister, will be entering the picture to take over the Myndi Mayer Advertising Agency. Loebs felt that since the ad gency had control of Diana's copyright that it was an interesting way to generate stories.

Other plots will concern a variety of characters including a story that will involve Vanessa's mother on a swashbuckling archeological outing that spells trouble for Princess Diana when she brings back something that was better left alone.

Rounding out guest appearances will be an eclectic group of characters including Hawkwoman and the Black Canary, whom Diana teamed up with during the *War of the Gods* series. Mason Trollbridge will also be dropping in, and, as one would expect with Loebs writing the book, we may just see the Flash from time to time.

The Viking Commando is another one of those characters that you might not expect to see in a *Wonder Woman* comic. Loebs figures him to be the perfect character to bring into *Wonder Woman*. "Why not, while she's trying to deal with American culture, throw some Norse mythology her way?" The Viking Commando was a Norseman that was taken by the Valkyries, to Valhalla, before his time. By the time the mistake was discovered and the red tape sorted out the Valkyries returned him during World War II. Since the soldiers were fighting Huns, and Vikings had a strong dislike for Huns, he joined the fray; complete with fur vest, sandals, army fatigues, an M-1 rifle and his trusty ax called Iron Fang. At this point in time it is anyone's guess as to how the Viking Commando will fit into the Wonder Woman scheme of things.

Wonder Woman In Wonder Woman

Loebs described one of the more interesting aspects of the *Wonder Woman* comic this way: "In the book, there exists a *Wonder Woman* comic. People know all about stuff like Paradise Island and the purple ray. In their world the *Wonder Woman* comic was started by the Myndi Mayer Agency and is drawn by Trina Robbins. In fact, Ed Indelicato is a big fan of the *Wonder Woman* comic—much to the chagrin of Wonder Woman. Ed is constantly joking that if they all get killed they can go to Paradise Island and be cured by the purple ray."

In terms of Paradise Island, even though the real name is Themyscira, people will continue to call it Paradise Island because of the comic book. Paradise Island will be out of the picture for the most part, as will the issue of allowing men onto Paradise Island which Loebs has put on the back burner for at least the first year. As Loebs puts it, "for the first year or so you won't be seeing much of Paradise Island or any other Amazons for that matter. We will be seeing Queen Hippolyte near the end of the first year involving a storyline in which Diana is seriously injured."

"One of the stranger characters that I would like to revive is Egg Foo," Loeb added. Egg Foo was this great big egg thing, twenty feet tall, with a stereotypical Japanese face. Loebs commented that, "no one knew why it was there but it was like the Fu Manchu of the *Wonder Woman* universe and I though I might have some fun with it."

There are certain apsects that not even Loebs cares to get involved with. "There was this period in the DC universe when everyone had to have a family of books, *Superman*, *Superboy*, *Wonder Woman*, *Wonder Mom*, *Wonder Tot*, that sort of thing. We won't be seeing any of that type of material—and definitely no invisible plane. I wasn't a big fan of the invisible plane and I don't think that it is one of the more memorable parts of the Wonder Woman mythos. I remember a story from the early days where Wonder Woman is being pursued by ICBMs and she climbs out on the wing of her invisible plane—of course wearing her high heels—and traveling at something like 300 mph, she deflects the missiles with her bracelets—*definitely* no invisible plane."

"As far as scheduling is concerned," Thorsland noted, "issue #62 will be Perez's last followed by the *Wonder Woman Special* #1 shipping in March. Issue #63 will ship in April and will wrap up events from the special and will also have the Teen Titans in it. Basically, #63 will kick off the new creative team as well as have the first of a series of covers by Brian Bolland."

With fifty years under her magic girdle, er, belt, and a fresh direction at the hands of a new writer and editor, not to mention a solid artisitic team, it appears as if Wonder Woman is headed towards her second fifty years of greatness! ●



...so far.



THE WONDER YEARS

A Fond Remembrance of Comics' Most Glamorous Oddity

Essay by Richard Howell

Sometimes a comic book series is launched—apparently out of nowhere—and you, the reader, may think, "What was on their minds when they gave this the green light?" I know it happens to me, and there are some series, even now, about which I wonder, "How did they sell this? How was the publisher convinced to give this series concept a shot? Isn't this just too weird for words?"

Okay, try this: super-heroine from an all-female society of quasi-mortals, the group exemplar of the unleashed power of women, who can only be conquered by subjugation to men. Our lead heroine is free to love, but must remain chaste. She's the emissary of the goddess of love, sent to sway the denizens of "man's world" away from the path of Mars, god of war. Our heroine is armed with a magic rope which, when it encircles anyone, compels that person to do her bidding, a set of bracelets (symbolic of her peoples' former enthrallment to men) with which she can bounce off any aggressive projectiles, and an invisible plane which obeys her every thought.

High concept, right?

Actually, it seems more like someone's impossible dream: a series basis so quirky, so odd, so downright eccentric that it has no precedent, especially in the testosterone-washed world of the super-adventurer.

This series did get picked up, though—by DC Comics in 1941—and became *Wonder Woman*, one of the company's legendary successes, and one of the only three super-hero characters whose adventures were published continuously from the Golden Age, through the Silver Age, into whatever age comics were struggling through in 1986. That's quite an achievement for any comics character, much more of one for a super-*heroine*, and *considerably* more of one for a series whose basis is so. . .so odd.

That's *Wonder Woman*, though. At its best it gloried in its differences from the rest of whatever other heroes were around at the time. The Wonder Woman series found its integrity in its unique perspective on heroics, politics, sex, mythology, and sisterhood. Never had such a comics success owed so little of it to following the established model for successful comics.

Her Origin

Wonder Woman was the brain-daughter of psychologist Moulton Marston, a successful professional (and inventor of the polygraph "lie detector") who saw Diana as the antidote to the male near-exclusivity among super-role-models. Wonder Woman would be a crusader *against* domination through force. Like Superman, she would hail from a race of the gifted. Like Batman, her individual achievements would hail from a race of the gifted. Like Batman, her individual achievements would be the result of her own hard work and training. She was an outsider who fit in effortlessly, a missionary with a playful sense of humor, and a zealot who preferred to teach by her own example.

Also, simply put, Wonder Woman was a sensation.

Princess Diana of the Amazons was brought up by her mother, the brunette Queen Hippolyte, on Paradise Island. No man could ever land on the island, by command of the Amazons' patroness, Aphrodite. They were all blissfully content in their loving supportive sisterhood until something happened which spoiled a lot of peoples' plans: World War II. A young American flyer and his plane washed up near the island and Diana rescued the unconscious hero before he drowned, bringing him to her lab outside the city (and being careful to never let his feet touch the ground). He died, but Diana revived and cured him with her just-developed Purple Ray. She also fell in love with him. His name was Steve Trevor.

Some back-story came in: the Amazons were a race of super women, created from clay by Aphrodite, in order to combat Mars' (and his followers') rule by force. Aphrodite's gift to Queen Hippolyte was a magic girdle, which guaranteed the Amazons' victory over any foes. Mars' lieutenant, Hercules, was beaten in a battle with Hippolyte, but his next plan was successful: he made love to her and stole her enchanted girdle. Without the implement, the Amazons were defeated and enslaved. Aphrodite aided in her disciples' escape (and led them to Paradise Island), but required that they forever after wear the metal wrist bands of their chains to remind them of "the folly of submitting to man's domination."

Later, Aphrodite repeated an earlier miracle of breathing life into Hippolyte's clay statue of a baby girl, and Princess Diana was born. Little Diana possessed the strength of Hercules, the speed of Mercury, plus other good points as well. When Aphrodite instructed Hippolyte to send her strongest Amazon into man's world (to return Trevor and to remain there—in America—and fight war and evil), a disguised Diana won the competition and was declared to be her people's Wonder Woman.

This story was told in slightly different versions in *All-Star Comics* #8 (December 1941), *Sensation Comics* #1 (January 1942), and *Wonder Woman* #1 (Summer 1942). By the time the last of these appeared, Wonder Woman was somewhere between a revered institution and a cottage industry. Marston had all the space he could have wanted to spin his tales linking the war with mythic ideological clashes, and his fantasy-filled fables that played off the themes of sexual domination, emotional deviancy, and sisterly solidarity.



The dual-personality Cheetah was one of WW's first opponents.

The series was aided immeasurely by the presence of Harry G. Peter as artist. According to the information pages in the comics themselves, Peter presided over a staff of four assistants, supplying all the visuals for every Wonder Woman story. His approach consisted of thick, measured brush lines which defined all the contours and sustained a minimum of modelling. The figure work was assured, but not expert, and the facial expressions were highly stylized. The art's overall impression ranged from German woodcut to Japanese wall-hangings, and it was always unique—a look suitable for such an eccentric comics series.

(A side note: the only identifiable artisan on the Peter staff was the great Frank Godwin of *Connie* and *Rusty Riley*, whose style is apparent in several 1943 stories, most notably "The Talking Lion," in *Sensation* #17.)

Peter's approach also included plenty of linework for surface decoration; flower-patterned clothing, borders, designs, paintings, wall-hangings, jewelry—a veritable cornucopia of art nouveau effects. This conceit had the advantage of allowing the bright, jewel-like coloring to create a shimmering, illuminated manuscript on the comics page.

Golden Years

Once Diana had moved to man's world (and bribed lookalike Diana Prince, army nurse, to move to South America with her fiance—at which time our Diana took over the other's life and career), Wonder Woman's exploits rushed out of the starting gate at full gallop. In *Wonder Woman* #1, she battled Axis agents, and was given an honorary military commission (she commanded the troops to all be true to their wives and sweethearts).

Wonder Woman #2 extended the series' tone to include political satire, with Mars' agents the Duke of Deception, the Earl of Greed, and Lord Conquest dealing and double-dealing with Mars, each other, and the head Axis leaders. Wonder Woman wound up having to travel to the Land of the Dead to rescue Steve from Mars' clutches. In one book-length story, there was enough of the various characters' shuttling back and forth to Mars to give the reader the idea that the red planet was as close as the corner store.

Issue # revived the Axis master spy Baroness Paula von Gunther (seemingly killed in #1), a canny combination of Marlene Dietrich and Cruella DeVille. Wonder Woman discovered



that the Baroness' dedication to her mission was due to the fact that young Gerta von Gunther was being detained by the Nazis. After Wonder Woman rescued Gerta, Paula attempted to reform, a process only complete after her face was disfigured in a fire (a heroic rescue attempt, of course) and Aphrodite bestowed on Paula a new, beautiful face, reflective of her new, beautiful self. Paula was a scientific genius and became Wonder Woman's sidekick. This issue also introduced Reform Island, a suburb isle of the Amazons' main digs, on which "girl prisoners" were shackled, fettered, disciplined, and taught to respect "loving authority."

Wonder Woman #4's battle with the Mole Men featured the Amazon's transformation of the night-blind tunnel dwellers by opening their eyes (surgically!) to the beauty of women. That issue also had a sly, self-referential point, in which Diana Prince and Steve Trevor question a suspect using a polygraph.

Emotions are twisted and uncontrolled in #5 and #6. In the former, Doctor Psycho, a demented genius dwarf, is jealous of his wife's attraction to handsome men, so he hypnotizes her and materializes malleable ectoplasm, using her as a medium. In #6, debutante Priscilla Rich's jealousy turns her into a monstrous Jekyll/Hyde creation, the Cheetah, who's compelled to ruin the lives of anyone to whom she feels inferior. The scenes of Priscilla talking to her evil other self in her dressing mirror are powerfully chilling.

These issues are consistently compelling and inventive. I remember, reading them for the first time in 1973, that I got my first real sense of what the Golden Age of Comics must have been like. These stories, with their drive and their odd ambiance, just sucked me, the reader, into another world entirely.

My own personal favorite issue was #9's "Reversal of Evolution." In it, Professor Zool of Holliday College uses his evolution machine on a female gorilla, who evolves into Giganta, a Junoesque redhead with the instincts of a savage beast. A mishap with the machine takes Wonder Woman and her entourage back 60 million years, and locks them in combat with cavemen, dinosaurs, and—of course—Giganta.

Later, the machine is repaired long enough to propel them all forward to Earth's Golden Age, in which peace reigns and selfishness is declasse. Giganta foments a revolution to institute a rule by force, and brings love of power and the awareness of the choice to do evil into this era. Later, Wonder Woman meets her own mother, many years before Hippolyte's



From *WW* #9.

fateful meeting with Hercules. It's a rousing, challenging fable, and masterfully delivered.

Wonder Woman went on to challenge the Invasion from Saturn, battle the mesmerizing cross-dresser Hypnota (and her cute little goatee), have adventures with or against the Winged Women of Venus and the Tigeapes of Neptunia. She travelled to frozen Bitterland, the enchanted vale of Shamrock Land, Pluto's Kingdom, and the Atom Universe. In #17, another multi-levelled allegory took the Wonder Woman crowd and Dr. Lana Kurree through "The Winds of Time" where, in each past era, Lana had to learn to depend on her own strength, not the various incarnations of her duplicitious fiance that they met *en route*.

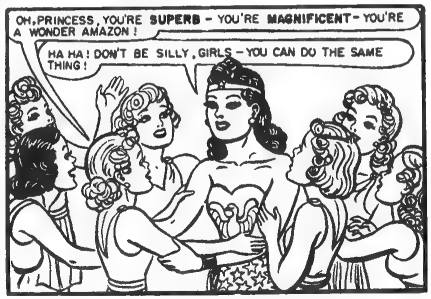
Post-War Decline

Wonder Woman's adventures, both in her own book and as the lead feature in *Sensation*, maintained a high level of quality and consistency until Marston's death in 1947, when persons unknown took over the writing until a new conservatorship could be found. Peter dropped his involvement with the Amazon's series shortly after Marston's passing, also, although he lived another decade, dying in 1958.

After Moulton's death, the Wonder Woman series attempted to retain its direction, but lost a lot of its drive. The lackluster artistic efforts by the remnants of the Peter staff were dark, mechanical, and rather ugly. The stories became quite conventional comics fare. Wonder Woman had begun her long decline.

The next step for the amazing Amazon was to move directly under the control of writer/editor Robert Kanigher, a true stylist and—arguably—comics' most prolific writer. Kanigher was committed to re-establishing Wonder Woman's series' distinctiveness, but he had very different ideas about what the strip should contain. Under Kanigher, Wonder Woman became the love object not only of Steve Trevor, but also of some neighboring half-human freaks named Bird-Man and Mer-Man (are further de-

Wonder Woman building up girls' self-esteem.





A taste of Kanigher's peculiar imagination.

scriptions necessary?).

Kanigher's Wonder Woman stories emphasized the fantasy aspects of the strip and dispensed with any sociological subtext and sexual politics (or any sex or any politics). It became increasingly removed from the contemporary setting of Superman, Batman, etc., to the point at which readers who wanted present-day Wonder Woman adventures had to—much later—turn to Julius Schwartz's super-team extravaganza Justice League of America (in which Wonder Woman was a founding member and a near-constant presence). Kanigher's stories not only had no relationship to the DC universe of that day; they also had little-to-no relationship to each other.

The most exemplary instance of Kanigher's anything-goes approach to each issue is the creation of the Wonder Family: Diana's (now) blonde-bombshell mom Queen Hippolyta, Diana herself, and the two "younger sisters," Wonder Girl and Wonder Tot. Originally, Kanigher had chosen to break up the mix of Wonder Woman adventures by alternating Diana's grown-up exploits with those of Diana as a teen-age Wonder Girl, then with Diana as a super-tot. In one issue, (#124), a magic photo-album flipped its pages super-fast and photos of Wonder Woman at her three pre-established ages merged into one "Wonder Family" story, billed as an "Impossible Tale."

Shortly thereafter, the impossible became real when the Wonder Family continued to coexist, without benefit of any photo-flipping. The only thing flipping was the readers, some of whom actually remembered that Hippolyta formed Diana out of clay, and was unlikely to have repeated the same miracle on a regular basis.

In general, Kanigher's reductive and noncontinuous approach to Wonder Woman storytelling worked against the series' success. The series went from subtly fascinating psycho-sexual action tales (under Moulton and Peter), to simple adventure stories for girls, to even simpler episodic stories aimed at *little* girls. Emblematically enough, Kanigher altered the key elements of Wonder Woman's origin (including baby Diana being brought to life from clay, and being the best Amazon because she worked to become stronger, faster, smarter, etc.) to the "Sleeping Beauty" version, in which the naturally-born baby Diana (the story opened with all the Amazon women weeping that all their menfolk(!) had been "killed in the wars") was visited by Hercules, Aphrodite, Mercury, and Athena, and was gifted in her cradle with the god-specific super-abilities. No mention was made of the child's pricking her finger on a spinning wheel.

One of the better aspects of this period was the graceful, personable art of Ross Andru and Mike Esposito. Their approach was a breath of fresh air after the sludgy look of their immediate predecessors, and the airy simplicity of their approach helped Kanigher's storybook handling of the characters adventures.

This was about the point at which I began to notice the Wonder Woman comic book. I knew that it existed, of course, since every character who appeared in the grand Schwartz/Fox/Sekowsky Justice League of America series had his (or her) own feature. Also, I knew that that temptress Wonder Woman wanted to inveigle me onto the tilt-a-whirl at Palisades Park, since she kept showing up in the books I bought offering me tickets. Little did she know that I would one day move into Leonia, the contiguous town to Palisades Park, and be soundly disappointed that her tickets were no longer of any use, since the Park had been razed and turned into condo units.

Well, to be entirely fair, I had experienced the Wonder Woman book once before, since my parents (reluctantly) bought me comic books sometimes, and once when I was eight or so, and extremely ill, they showed up with a small pile of comics for me, including Wonder Woman #164, "Wonder Girl's Stolen Face." This was one issue that was released during the period in which no one was really sure whether Wonder Girl was a real player in the series or whether her adventures were some strange offshoot of the "Impossible Tales," which by that time had been quite successfully developed into complete incomprehensibility.

The issue in question had some sort of linkage between the legendary Medusa and an alien face-stealer, which led inevitably to Wonder Girl having half her face transformed into a green monster-visage, and her destroying most of Paradise Island in her resultant rage, until she—almost coincidentally—happened upon the villain and got her real face back.

The story was undevelopmental in the extreme, yet I enjoyed it. Maybe it was—as has been suggested—

because I was eight years old, but I still tend to think it was because I was dangerously feverish and passed out every couple of pages.

Kanigher's peculiar imagination resulted in a very odd mix of stories. When Wonder Woman (as herself or one of her earlier selves) wasn't fighting laughable super-villains like Angle Man and Mouse Man, she was getting entangled with equally feckless freaks of nature. In issue #151, Wonder Girl (and "teenage test pilot" Lt. Steve Trevor) battle the Glop, a gooey blob of alien protoplasm (with a looney grin and goo-goo eyes) who swallowed one hundred rock-and-roll records and sang "hep" love ballads to his prey, Wonder Girl. In #157-8, Wonder Woman was menaced by Egg Fu, a giant, bodiless egg-head with the appearance and speech patterns of a racially-unenlightened version of an oriental mastermind.

In issue #156, an experimental story sucked Wonder Woman into a doppelganger of one of her own Golden Age adventures, complete with Andru and Esposito affecting the cruder aspects of the 1940s look of the series. With #159, the entire series shifted back into pseudo-Golden Age adventures, kicked off by yet another origin issue (more faithful this time). This digression, while amusing enough on its own terms, was indisputable proof that Kanigher had no understanding whatsoever of the core components of Wonder Woman's original concepts or how to adapt them into a present-day sales success.

Andru and Esposito's work, stripped of its natural grace and forced into an uncomfortable mold, looked labored and unattractive. This short run harmed their reputations for years. The "Golden Age" experiment lasted less than a year and the art returned to A&E's more natural style until #172, where they were replaced by other Kanigher mainstays, such as Irv Novick and Ric Estrada.

Sixties Revamp

Wonder Woman was on hard times, and, according to office sources at the time, her book was up for cancellation. With nothing to lose, Wonder Woman was reassigned to editor Jack Miller, who implemented the most drastic—and successful—revamp in the history of comics' most-revamped character.

Wonder Woman #178 started the ball rolling with a new writer (Dennis O'Neil), a new penciller (Mike Sekowsky), and a new inker (Dick Giordano). The tone was new, and contemporary, the dialogue a tremendous improvement over years of Kanigher's odd stylizations, and the art was lively and personable. The story was a simple Wonder-Woman-must-clear-Steve-of-murder run-through, but it read more like a good Marvel comic of the period than any issue of Wonder Woman that had ever existed before. The plot necessitated that Diana Prince give up her wallflower pose and become a mod fashion plate—and a capable, crusading, self-sufficient woman, who was primarily responsible for earning Steve Trevor his freedom.

With the next issue, Diana took center stage for good, as the Amazons and their island left this dimension, taking Wonder Woman's super-powers with them. Diana went back to the mainland and befriended an aged Oriental sensei named (koff!) I Ching, who became her Tonto/Charlie Chan/Ancient One. After a few montage scenes, Diana became a formidable fighting machine, and then she was set on the trail of I Ching's enemy, Dr. Cyber.

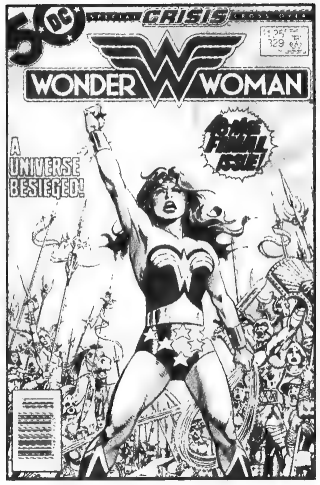
With #180, Cyber was introduced in person, Steve Trevor was killed, Diana took to wearing leather, and the new series was selling well—a tremendous improvement over a very few months.

The reinterpretation of Diana Prince had been based on the wildly popular Emma Peel character played by Diana Rigg on The *Avengers* TV series: sexy, savvy, and swathed in body-hugging jumpsuits (sometimes leather ones!), Rigg's Mrs. Peel had already become a pervasive sex symbol/role model, and Miller et al. were demonstrating good sense and taste in re-forming Diana Prince in Rigg's image. All in all, it was a fine re-launch. O'Neil's scripts were as close to the cutting-edge of the youth culture as stodgy DC dared to go, and Sekowsky's off-kilter energy meshed perfectly with Giordano's expert graphic polish. Sekowsky needed coherence and prettification; Giordano needed power and eccentricity. In short order, they became each other's perfect artistic collaborator, each complementing the strengths and minimizing the weak-

Mike Sekowsky's *WW*, based on Diana Rigg's Emma Peel.







nesses of the other.

O'Neil's version of the character was an unstable mix of traits. She was skilled in battle, but dependent on I Ching for directions, and she was completely dunderheaded about her own life, falling in love with two completely unsuitable men in the space of three issues.

With #183, Sekowsky assumed the writing himself (DC was experimenting with artist/writers at the time), and eliminated Diana's stereotypically "female" personality drawbacks. He did not replace them with much else, however, and protagonist Diana's place in Sekowsky's stories could just as easily be filled with a male hero. Sekowsky did gift the formerly hapless ex-Amazon with a sense of humor, though, and in some issues (the lesbian cross-dresser S&M B&D chicken-hawk classic "Them" in #185, and the first appearance of the manic-depressive sorceress Morgana in #186 are prime examples of rich, dark absurdity), she really needed it.

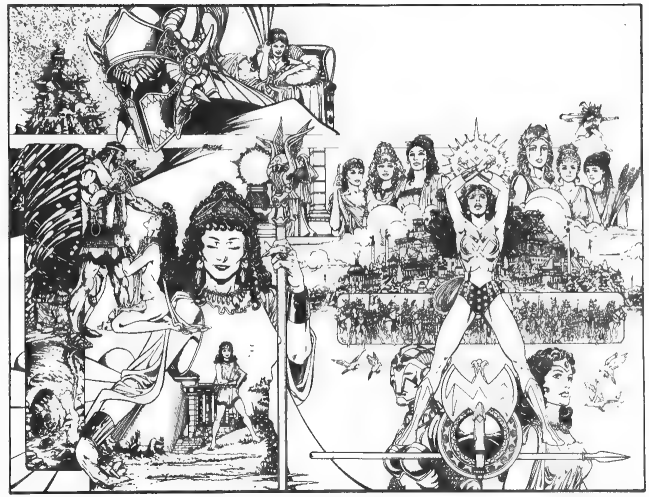
The Sekowsky run on Wonder Woman remained a strong seller for DC, even in the face of overall slumping newsstand sales, but Sekowsky himself was experiencing some difficulty with DC management. He was let go rather abruptly, and two double-sized issues of WW reprinted earlier Sekwosky stories, while DC scrambled to assemble a team to approximate Sekowsky's quirky appeal. They were not entirely successful, but it soon made no difference. Time was running out for the "new" Wonder Woman.

The post-Sekowsky run started off badly with two beautifully-drawn Jeff Jones covers depicting Diana in stylish bondage being menaced by semi-clad or disfigured oppressors wielding sharp instruments. The inside contents, by writers O'Neil or Delaney, and art by Heck and/or Giordano, seemed unfocused, ungrounded, and sometimes a too-strident misapplication of feminist angst. In one issue, former Amazon Diana confessed that, "In most cases, [she] didn't even *like* women." Huh? Whose bright idea was *that*?



The '80s: Trina Robbins' "neo-Golden Age" Wonder Woman; *Wonder Woman* cancelled, and then reborn under George Perez's guidance.

Wonder Woman as seen by Michael Kaluta.



Back to Basics

A 1972 Wonder Woman cover on *Ms.* magazine had revived interest in certain quarters to restore the Amazing Amazon to her former super-powered glory, and *Ms.* staffers (led by Gloria Steinem) fanned the flames by issuing a hardcover reprint volume of Golden Age Moulton/Peter Wonder Woman stories. As of Wonder Woman #204, the existing "new" WW plotlines were abandoned entirely (leaving a cliff-hanger abruptly unresolved), and the series was returned to Robert Kanigher. The next issue began with a mad sniper killing several people, including a couple in a moving car. The car mowed down I Ching and injured Diana enough to require her hospitalization.

She awoke in a trance, and found her way back to the inexplicably-reappeared Paradise Island. That issue also introduced Wonder Woman's heretofore-unsuspected black "twin" sister Nubia, and began one of the worst short-run periods in Wonder Woman's long history. The art anged from rushed-looking to dreadful (veteran artist Don Heck was repeatedly called in to save deadlines at the start of these new creator regimes, and was inevitably replaced by less suitable talent) and the stories were worse than inconsequential.

(A particularly nasty gesture occurred during the sniper sequence in #204, in which one of the victims was a "Dottie Cottonman," a transparent alias for Dorothy Woololk, the editor who was announced as taking over Wonder Woman, but who left DC before that could be implemented.)

Kanigher's return lasted only nine issues, and the series was turned over to Superman-editor Julius Schwartz in an effort to bring the chracter up to minimal DC super-hero standards. Schwartz was largely successful at that, but he failed to establish any tone or direction for the newly-contemporized series (perhaps because there was an almost-complete turnover of creative personnel from issue to issue). As a result of DC's decision to return Wonder Woman to her super-self (and the lack of any clear thinking about the series beyoung that), they left behind a successful, experimental reworking of a once-valuable concept and returned it to its previous condition as an embarrassing mediocrity. Wonder Woman's glory days were finally, officially long gone.

The Amazon Princess suffered under the one-two punch of needing major reinterpretation to appeal to the current readership, and being too valuable as a static licensing property to allow that to happen. The series sold sluggishly, routinely attracted inapplicable talent, and continued on its long downward spiral. Except for a momentary blip or two (Jack Harris' tenure and Roy Thomas' first three-parter come to mind), it was an extended disappointment to Wonder Woman's long-suffering fans. Once the so-called "royalty" system became established, creators on the low-selling Wonder Woman series either had to love the character enough to swallow the loss in potential income, or simply have no other professional options.

The Post-*Crisis* Wonder Woman

Eventually, in 1986, DC took advantage of their fictional universe's restructuring in the wake of Crisis on Infinite Earths, and cancelled the Wonder Woman series and all its history, with its 329th issue.

Fittingly enough for such an eccentric concept, Wonder Woman experienced a brief last hurrah after its cancellation, in *The Legend of Wonder Woman*, a four-issue salute to the later years of the Moulton/Peter period by Kurt Busiek and Trina Robbins. It determinedly avoided all the numerous missteps perpetrated on the character since 1950, and was a respectful send-off to the atypical qualities that had made the Wonder Woman series so unique at its outset.

More recently, another new version of WW had debuted, helmed by creative powerhouse George Perez. It's well-done, and quite interesting on its own terms, but it's not Wonder Woman's Golden Age. I don't think any series can be quite that odd ever again. ●

MARVEL ACTION FIGURES

by Robert J. Sodaro

At some point between the discarding of their Fisher-Price playthings and the discovery of the fairer sex, most young boys' fancies will turn to other outlets, other toys. And since "playing with dolls" is far too effeminate a thing for pre-macho young dudes to be engaged in, these soon-to-be-testosterone-infused manlings must find another outlet for their imaginings, and "buddy-bonding" behavior. Hence the initial rationalization for "man-dolls" or the euphemistically-named "Action Figures."

Action Figures—what a concept. Now, the other half of the country's juvenile population could be sold essentially the same toys that their sisters play with, only labeled as "Action Figures" and outfitted with the latest ordnance instead of makeup mirrors or kitchen utensils so young boys wouldn't feel like sissies playing with them. And none of this Ken and Skip stuff; give them manly names like GI Joe and Major Matt Mason, then make them soldiers and astronauts. That will bring the boys in. Whoever decided to rename dolls "action figures" and market them for boys knew what they were doing, because, say what you may, boys like "playing with dolls" just as much as girls.

Still, just as the comic book reading population turns over every three years or so, so too does the toy-buying public. "The toy trade is a funny animal," says Alan Gordon, VP of Marketing at Marvel Comics. "The toy industry turns over 60% of its product every year. [Marvel] always looks for reasons why we should be carried in the store."

An Informal History of Marvel Action Figures

One of the earliest action figures from my own youth was GI Joe, introduced in 1964. In addition to Joe, there was Captain Action, who was a chameleon hero. Among his accoutrements came cloth costumes that dressed him up as Superman, Captain America, and Spider-Man, among others. (Man, the royalty rights on this guy must have been out of this world.)

Even as GI Joe's popularity was waning, Marvel made its first foray into the action figure market with a line of heroes that included Spider-Man, Captain America, and the Fantastic Four. This batch of heroes, issued in the early '70s from Mego, were fully possible and came dressed for action.

Basically, the figures had three body types: a bulky male, a slender male, and a female, which all stood between 7½ and 8 inches tall. Fitted with various heads, these three body types comprised the thirteen characters of the original Marvel superhero line. Hulk and Thing shared the same (bulky) body (Hulk's was green; Thing's was orange), while Captain America, Spidey, and the rest laid claim to the other male body type (the Human Torch's body was red, the Falcon's was black, and the rest were a California suntanned pink). The final body type was that of the lone female action figure, Sue Storm, the Invisible Girl.

Each character was adorned with a removable cloth costume and a head that reflected their mask (a webbed one for Spidey, a flame one for Johnny Storm, an unmasked face for Mr. Fantastic, etc.). Although there were more similarities between these figures than differences, a couple of them did skew off from the norm.

The Lizard sported scaly forearms and lower legs (along with a green body and reptile head), and a stuffed tail; Thing's forearms and head were rocky; Sue, Thor, and Conan had "real" hair; with Thor holding his legendary Uru hammer, and Conan armed with a sword and battle-ax. Naturally, Cap carried his patriotic shield, and the Green Goblin had his pouch of tricks (although he didn't—unfortunately—come equipped with his Goblin glider).

Around 1967, Marvel also issued six plastic die characters (a forerunner of today's PVCs?). These plastic figurines were a solid five-to-six inches of plastic. They were not posable, and each character was a single color (Spidey and DD were red, Hulk was green, etc.), and stood courtesy of a base that connected both their feet, unlike today's PVC's which are some 3½" tall, and are (mostly) free-standing.

Two other types of "action" figures were the Spider-Man and Captain America parachute and "bendable" figures. The first were die-cut 4½" high characters, from Azrak-Hamway International (issued in 1973), and were each connected to a large vinyl 'chute via strings. They were designed to be tossed into the air and float gently to the ground. (Spidey's 'chute was emblazoned with a large spider and web, while Cap's sported a representation of his famous shield.) The "bendables" (Mego, also from '73) were about 5" tall—an inch shorter than today's bendables.



Changing Times, Changing Tastes

After their brief run for the sun in the early '70s, Marvel got caught in the 60% crunch—that is, lost the favor of the toy-buying public—and all but disappeared from sight. Although there were no Marvel action figures for some time, Marvel did offer numerous other licensed products. During the late '70s George Lucas' SF brainchild came to the light of day and for a time, everything was Star Wars. Still, while action figures never quite lost public favor, they didn't seem as popular for a time. During the '80s Marvel, under the helm of Jim Shooter, foisted the *Secret Wars* upon an unsuspecting comic-buying public. To help generate fan interest in the series, he pitched a new series of action toys.

One unconfirmed anecdote had Shooter at the offices of Kenner toys (who eventually crafted the figures), and them declining because there were numerous other licensed versions of the Marvel characters. Whereupon Shooter was supposed to have said, "If you pick up the line, you'll have exclusive rights to Spider-Man's new costume." Thrilled over the prospect of having an exclusive over what could only be a hot property, Kenner agreed. As the story goes, Shooter then returned to the Marvel offices and commissioned Mike Zeck to develop a new look for Spidey. Needless to say, the truth of that story is a moot point, and serves to point out the power of a hot toy property.

The ill-fated "Secret Wars" line didn't sit well with many fans at the time is was issued, due in part to the pallid nature of the series itself. Perhaps the reason that many fans (this writer included) looked down on that line of characters was due to their associationg it with the whole concept of mondo-tremendous, multi-part, epic sagas, which along with DC's Continuity "Crises", soured fandom on trans-continuity storylines and associated action figures (DC had its own line of action figures at that time.)

Time being what it is, and fogging the memory as it tends to do, it is quite possible that the characters of the Secret Wars line weren't as bad as they then seemed. They were movable, and all came with extra items in the packages (shields with flip-art and the like that made them appear more juvenile than they should have). These figures originally sold in the $4-$6 range, but now command prices between $15 and $45. Apparently, in collecting, as in the rest of life, hindsight is 20/20.

Dawn of the Turtles

One of the hottest success stories of the '80s was that of Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, and their quartet of terrapin heroes. In 1984, as the now legendary story goes, a pair of unknown fans accidentally combined several then-popular genres (teenagers, mutants, and ninjas) with anthropomorphic turtles, and then sprinkled the concept liberally with jabs at Frank Miller's *Daredevil* to develop what would become the hottest property on the planet.

In 1986, licensing agent Mark Freedman approached the pair of creators and helped turn the turtles into cash cows. In 1988 the Turtles became animated TV stars in a syndicated cartoon show designed to promote a line of figures from Playmates which grossed some $25 million by year's end. Two years later, the sales of their toy line really shot through the roof (about $150 million by 1990), making the creators and their agent mega-bucks, and the young turtles mega-stars.

Today, you can't walk into a toy store without seeing entire aisles dedicated to the half-shell heroes, disproving an old toy industry adage that green just won't sell. Right about now, there are probably more licensed turtle products than there were for Star Wars. The Playmate figures stand about 4" in height and come equipped with several ninja-style weapons. As with the Star Wars characters, there are numerous versions of the figures, including ones that move, ones that talk, and ones that merely stand there and pose.







As to why the turtles are so popular, artist, writer, and self-publisher Steve Bissette offered up this view. "I'll tell you very simply. . .weaponry, toys, GI Joe, Japan. Those have always been a large part of the toy market, at least in the '80s. The Mutant Turtles are the perfect segue between stuffed animals that very, very young kids play with, and the GI Joe toys that they grow into later. It's a perfect in-between item."

Marvelous Toys from the House of Ideas

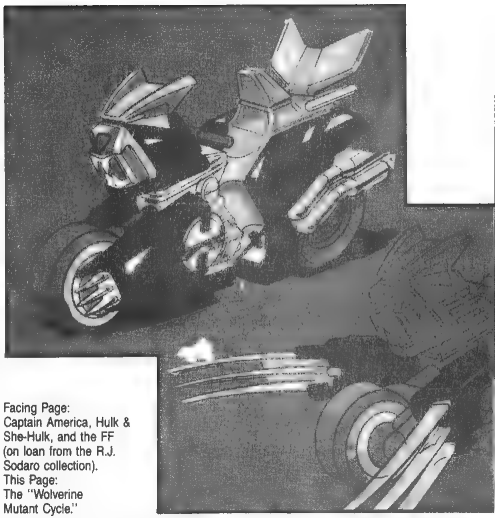
Not to be outdone (or left out) of the toy gravy train, Marvel re-entered the action-figure market in 1987 with a line of PVCs (Polyvinyl Chloride), figures aimed at the European market. This line of PVCs, not for sale in the U.S. save through the odd retailer or two, include perennial favorites Spider-Man, Captain America, and Thor, but also include variations on their later issued U.S. counterparts. The European Hulk is green, rather than gray, and the European She-Hulk is modeled after the original incarnation of Jennifer Walters (she is wearing Jenny's initial "costume"—a torn Danskin, rather than the purple tights of the U.S. PVC).

Additionally, the European line includes at least one character that doesn't appear in the U.S. lineup—Spider-Woman. Naturally, the European PVCs are in different poses than their American counterparts, and are hand-painted. They also have nicer poses, more attention to detail, etc. One of the reasons for this, according to Marvel's Alan Gordon, is the higher cost of the European versions, which is about six bucks, American (the import/collector price being closer to $15 a pop).

Another is due in part to the differences in laws surrounding toys. "The manufacturers are in Europe. [There are] different laws, there's no tariffs, no taxes. We have to manufacture in the Orient with all these duties, taxes, and freight," Gordon told us. "I don't think you'd pay $6.00 for a PVC figure [in the U.S.]." Perhaps he is right, but hard-core fans would pay big bucks to possess import items. Still, Marvel could lose its shirt attempting to cater to this small niche of the market.

Needless to say, the success of the European PVCs prompted Marvel to introduce a similar line into the U.S., so in 1989, fans were delighted with the announcement of a line of PVCs. Initial figures included Spidey, Cap, the Punisher, and Wolverine. This was followed the next year by a grouping that included Dr. Doom, the Hobgoblin, Black Panther, and numerous others.

Unfortunately, while sales of the characters were brisk, many fans were more than a little disappointed with the results. The original Spidey, while in a cool crouching pose, was a tad on the lumpy side, and not only did his head seems oddly disproportionate to his body, but he is proportionally larger than the other PVCs. The first Wolverine's face looks vaguely Japanese and the claws on both are not as long as they appear in the comics. Iron Man, while purportedly patterned after a Jack Kirby drawing, not only looks incredibly silly, but is incapable of standing.



Facing Page:
Captain America, Hulk & She-Hulk, and the FF (on loan from the R.J. Sodaro collection).
This Page:
The "Wolverine Mutant Cycle."

Other characters that have difficulty standing are She-Hulk, (who, in addition to an oversized bust, has a goofy look on her face), Colossus (who otherwise is a very impressive figure), Black Panther (who, fitted with a short cape, looks more like his original incarnation of Cole Tiger), and Thor, (who, like Colossus, is in an otherwise dramatic pose).

As to why these problems occurred, Gordon pointed out that Marvel is a comic book publisher, not a toy manufacturer, and thus is, to some extent, at the mercy of whatever company is designing and manufacturing the toy. "We always retain all approval rights," Gordon told us, "However, we also have to be partners with our licensee. We can make great action figures that will cost $20, and no one will buy them. We have to create something in the $4.99 to $6.99 range. There is a limited amount of activity or action you can put in the product, there is a certain size you can go with, there are a certain number of colors you can put on the figure. So we are limited by marketplace constraints."

As for the non-standing members of the Marvel cast of characters, Gordon explained those away by saying, "We've fixed that starting next year. You have to understand that when we gave that approval they were in clay form, so they all stood." He went on to say that they switched to a new vendor starting with the next group of characters Marvel will issue later this year. (Point-in-fact, this will be the third or fourth time Marvel has switched PVC manufacturers). "We learn by our mistakes. If we continued to manufacture figures that didn't stand, we wouldn't be in action figures very long."

Other silly, or odd-ball poses include those of the Vision (who looks like he is attempting to scare someone), Scarlet Witch (who could have been frightened by a mouse—or perhaps the Vision), Ms. Marvel (who looks like she is going to take flight), and Ghost Rider (who just plain looks silly). However, on the positive side, the second Spidey and Wolverine are much better than the originals (even though Wolverine stands just a tad too tall), while Dr. Doom and Magneto look menacing, and Captain Britain

looks positively massive.

Then, of course, there are the stars of the PVC line, which include (but are not limited to) Hulk (big, broad and frighteningly gray), the Thing (squat, lumpy, and orange), Dr. Strange (in a classic Ditko pose), and Archangel (aloft and grim, with his wings folded around him). Then there's the Lizard, who is far and away the coolest of the currently-issued PVCs, what with his white lab coat flapping in the wind as he races along hunting for his long-time arachnid enemy. Honorable mentions go to the Hobgoblin, who is the only character (thus far) to come equipped with one of his tools of trade (his detachable Goblin flyer), and to Mr. Fantastic, whose elongated arms look pretty nifty.

Marvel also has an abridged line of smaller PVCs—also for the fan market—that is confined to the key characters of Spidey, Cap, and Hulk. This is actually two lines in one, as these characters are issued both as stand-alones, and attached to key rings or strings dangling from suction cups.

A Piece of the Action

Hand in hand with their PVC line, which is sold exclusively to comic shops, Marvel brought out a new line of posable action figures. This line of figures, first issued in 1990, is not only Marvel's most ambitious, but it is also their most well-designed. Each figure comes packed with an item useful for that character: e.g., Spidey has suction cups on his hands, and a splayed-out patch of webbing; Doc Ock has two of his mechanical arms fitted with claws, and two with suction cups (the better to reach his arch-foe, one would assume); the Punisher, naturally, has enough hardware to equip a small army (and a solo-action cap-shooter built in his back); and—on the silly side—the Hulk comes with a rock he can throw and a bar he can bend with his action grip.

As one can expect, the manufacturer, Toy Biz, felt it necessary to alter some of the character's recognized trademarks. For instance, Cap's shield is now launched from a wrist-launcher, while DD's trusty billy club is now a grappling hook that is likewise delivered to its target. On the positive side, the Silver Surfer hangs 10 on his friction-powered, wheeled surfboard. The oddest choice of apparatus to come with one of these figures is that of Dr. Doom. He carries a "devastating super drill" and a "brick-busting rotor blade."

One other discrepancy occurs with the Punisher, who has four guns packed with him but the ability to hold only one at a time, and no place to store or carry the rest. Further, the package states that one of these weapons is a bazooka, but the four guns are in fact an Uzi, an M16, a Tommygun, and a .45 caliber pistol, with no bazooka in sight. Ah well, one can only dream.

Each of the eight original action figures give the purchaser the opportunity to subscribe to any of three titles: *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Captain America*, or *Silver Surfer*, for 50% off regular prices. In addition to the eight characters (and discounts on comics), there are also two cars (the Captain America Turbo Coupe and the Spider-Man Dragster) and a training center for all the figures. Spidey's car can launch web disks, and the training center has facilities for all the heroes, including things for everyone to climb as well as a ramp for the Surfer's board and breakaway columns for the Hulk to smash.

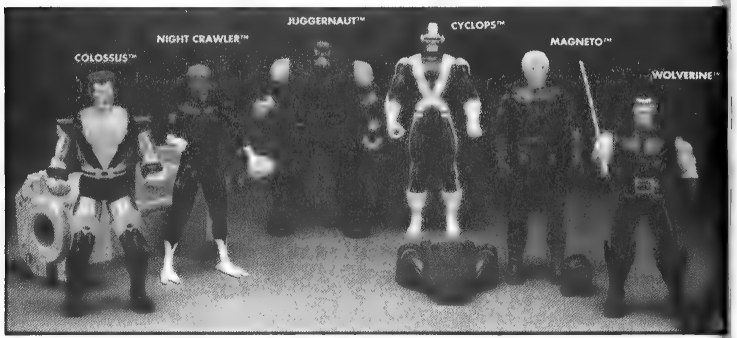
The Future Is Now

As this article was being penned, Marvel had just issued its latest action figures which is/was an X-Men line timed to cash in as a major promotional tie-in with the release of the new *X-Men* comic book and all the hoopla surrounding it. The characters included in this latest batch are Wolverine, Storm, Archangel, Night Crawler, Cyclops, Colossus, Juggernaut, Magneto, and Apocalypse. As before, there are other items available: a "Mutant cycle" for Wolverine, and a car for Magneto dubbed the "Magneto Magnetron," plus a pair of danger rooms (the "Combat Cave" and the "Light Force Arena").

These characters all come with "usual" materials that come with each character (sword and mask for Wolverine, lightning bolt for Storm, suction cups, sword, and fully posable tail for Night Crawler, and a monstrous set of barbells for Colossus). Once again, there is the requisite amount of licensee-induced silliness that gives us "roller motion" and removable ramming armor for Juggernaut, and magnetized hands and chest for Magneto that attract metal debris ("Stop, or I'll bean you with this gear shaft!").

In addition to the items mentioned above, this series also contains a special version of the first series of Impel trading cards. As an aside to collectors, these special cards are not quite identical to the original series (the backs are a different color and the Toy Biz logo replaces the "Did you know" text at the bottom). This special set of cards will undoubtedly render incomplete every collection of the first series—much akin to the effect the "X-Force" cards will have on the second series).

A line of X-Men figures is appearing to capitalize on the hoopla about *X-Men* #1.



All of the ancillary toys (cars, dioramas, etc.) have special features as well. Wolverine's cycle has claws that extend from the front and is able to pop a wheelie, while Magneto's Magnetron includes a hidden spring-action catapult to fire magnetic projectiles and a magnet hidden in the nose of the car. The twin danger rooms offer things like exploding boxes, collapsing walls, and other devices to test the mettle of the X-Men.

One can only suppose that "action cars" just simply go with "action figures" (due, no doubt, in part to the Batmobile), which is why toy companies insist on giving our heroes such ridiculous items that they never possess in the comics. Still, if fans have to suffer with launchers for shields and billy clubs, cycles, and "rolling armor" just so we can have 3-D toys of our favorite heroes, then perhaps that is a small price to pay.

A Step Up

A third tier exists in Marvel's marketing plan of action figures. These are their "oversized" vinyl characters. In this series (which stand 15" tall), there are Spider Man, Hulk, Venom, Phoenix, and Punisher (with Wolverine and Magneto in the offing). The newer figures come with extras: Wolverine with a removable mask and a katana sword, and Magneto with more "magnetic debris" and a removable helmet.

The reasoning for the three different sizes was explained by Alan Gordon. "We are going for different markets. The PVCs are created exclusively for the comic book stores. We may have at this point 30 different characters. We would never market that way to the mass market. We also can't demand that much space at retail.

"There is a need for different figures for different markets," he said. "Some kids want to put them out to pose, as collectibles, and other kids play with them. The larger dolls really target someone who is a true Spider-Man, Hulk, Venom fan, and wants a large doll. That's why we provide a bigger figure."

He said that in the fan market Marvel can go very broad, and not have huge production runs on each character. "Our purpose there is to satisfy as broad a range of fans as we possible can. If you're a Lizard fan, eventually there will be—and there has been—a Lizard PVC." He went on to concede that a Lizard action figure wouldn't do well in the mass market, "because kids wouldn't know the Lizard."

Into the Future

Other new characters are: not one, but two Spider-Man figures (one with web-shooting action and one with web-climbing ability), a Punisher with sound (interestingly, the 1991 Toy Biz catalogue displays the old Punisher with copy proclaiming the new one's features), Iron Man with detachable armor (and what looks like a teeny-tiny head), and Thor with spring-action hammer and lightning bolt.

The new villains include the Green Goblin with spring-activated throwing action and three glow-in-the-dark pumpkins, and the eagerly-awaited Venom, with "living skin" slime pores!

The Toy Biz catalogue also includes other Marvel-licensed toys; what appears to be a new Spider-Man dragster (though why he needs two is beyond me) that features a grappling hook and two launchable web disks, and a Punisher battle van with a roof-mounted machine gun, tire-gutting blades hidden under the hubcaps, and an additional machine gun that pops out of the back.

Two new battle rooms will also become available: Spider Man's Attack Tower and Punisher's Shooting Gallery. Spidey's tower is a bi-level platform that allows Spidey to practice his web-throwing and web-climbing skills, and comes with a catapult. In the shooting gallery the Punisher utilizes a pivoting machine gun to fire projectiles at various items, including cut-outs of villains.

The catalogue doesn't state when these items will be available, but one would suspect that since it carries a '91 cover date anything that hasn't been issued as of this date this was written (late August) will appear by Christmas. Most of the current Marvel products discussed this far will be available in both the fan and mass markets; the notable exception being the PVCs, which are specifically targetted towards fans.

Marvel Action Figures: The Next Generation

As for the future, Gordon sees more and better products, utilizing new technology as it becomes available; picking new, hot characters, as well as recycling older, popular ones. "To a certain extent, the action figures are dictated by the toy business. Next year, every year, we will try to come out with a new version of Wolverine, Punisher, and Spider-Man. Our fans are reacting positively to those characters. We'll do some of the X-Force characters—Cable, Shatterstar.

He pointed out that there's always new technology being developed in the Orient, and Marvel certainly wants to remain on the cutting edge and incorporate those features in their characters. "Whether it's talking or any electronics. So it could be lighting or talking or noise or what-have-you. We'd like to incorporate it if it makes sense." (Currently, there are already action figures that utilize some of this technology for sound and electronics, most notably, the Turtles.) Gordon went on to say that he would like to develop some of Marvel's lesser-known characters or groups.


The Lizard.

"I think one property that is terrific is Alien Legion. It's got figures and a storyline that we know works. You could say it's the French Foreign Legion millions of years in the future. There are interesting characters, interesting names, vehicles: there's weaponry; that's a boy's action figure line." To his credit, Gordon knows his business and takes a passing credit in the development of Ghost Rider as a PVC, and—sometime next year—as an action figure.

As a fan of comics for the better part of the past three decades, I personally had always yearned for comic-related toys in my youth, and was somewhat distressed that my chosen pastime didn't have toy representations of my heroes. Now, as an adult with my own son, I am thrilled that Marvel is making a serious foray into the licensing market, and that there are now dozens of licensed products on the market (I just have to convince my wife that the toys I buy are for my son, not me).

Still, as Gordon said, Marvel learns from every contact with licensors, and as their products do well (both comics and licensed), Marvel will gain more clout, so eventually, when that 60% turnover occurs, not all of Marvel's characters will be caught up in the backwash. In the meantime, face front, true believers, because I've seen the toy future of Marvel, and it looks a lot like the inside of Al Gordon's office. Now, there's a man with a way-cool job. ●



A SHORT RIDE with JOE MATT

By Jeff Lang



Joe Matt has been lying to us. He's been portraying himself as a loud-mouthed, neurotic, lust-crazed, cheapskate in the autobiographical cartoons he's done for Kitchen Sink's late, lamented *Snarf*, and, more recently, in *Drawn & Quarterly*. For the record, Joe Matt is not loud-mouthed. In fact, he's so soft-spoken that I had to interview him twice because the microphone didn't pick up most of the first one. As to the rest of the stuff, he only talks about stuff that personal in his comic strips.

Joe Matt's first collection of strips, *Peepshow*, published by Kitchen Sink Press, is scheduled to appear in December '91, and early in 1992, Drawn & Quarterly will publish the first issue of his new bimonthly book which will also be called *Peepshow* unless Joe thinks of something he likes better.

This interview was conducted on Saturday, September 29, 1991.

JEFF LANG: *I found an issue of* Snarf *I didn't have, #14, the one that has the "Some Things You Need to Know About Joe Matt" strip in it.*

JOE MATT: I don't like that one. And it's "Some *More* Things You Need to Know."

LANG: *Okay, "Some* More *Things." Why don't you like it?*

MATT: Those kinds of strips are weak. It lacks a story.

LANG: *When you say "lacking a story, or "weak," what are you comparing it to? In the same issue we have "The Trouble with Heidi," "My Old Roommates," an untitled piece about porn stars, and the one with the clown-faced psychiatrist.*

MATT: I guess I like the one about the porn stars the best.

LANG: *You mean you feel that one has the most story?*

MATT: Yeah, I guess so. I don't know. I have to be careful or I'll start putting down everything about my work.

LANG: *Then let's talk about something you do like. What's in the* Peepshow *collection?*

MATT: I've been doing the self-contained pages for about four years now and all of them will be appearing in the Kitchen Sink collection. As I did them, though, I wanted to do longer pieces, so, at the end of the book, there's the 8-page "Sexaholics" strip, and a 4-page story and a 5-page story that haven't appeared anywhere.

LANG: *Are they, like "Sexaholics," more about an issue or an incident, than your earlier work?*

MATT: They're following my present-day life. I seem to be moving in that direction. [I'm] more concerned about describing the present moment than I am in doing a strip about high school. I feel like I've gotten a good deal of the past out of the way and laid a good foundation with this first collection.

LANG: *I'm looking at "Hell to Pay" in* Drawn & Quarterly *#4. . . .*

MATT: The one with 96 panels on one page?

LANG: *That's the one.*

MATT: Actually, that was actually a lot longer the way I laid it out at first, maybe twice as long. When I lay a story out in my sketch book, I hardly draw at all. I just write and rough in happy faces or screaming faces—either eyebrows are going up or down—that's the John Stanley influence. The page gets laid out and then I'll start cutting out panels or combining them and eventually I'll just find a number I like. I've since totally abandoned that method and I now work with six panels a page. It's a whole lot more enjoyable working this large. I'm following Chester Brown's example by working on single panels and then taping them up in the end.

LANG: *How will the work you'll be doing in the regular* Peepshow *book compare with the work you've been doing in* Drawn & Quarterly*?*

MATT: It will be the same in the sense that it's autobiographical. The recurring characters will be the same, basically myself and my girlfriend, Trish, but I'm also drawing a bit more realistically, or at least it's what I think of as realistic. It shows more detail. I'm not drawing my glasses like the egg-shaped kind that I used to do—I'm drawing them like they really are and putting sides on them.

LANG: *Not quite so minimalistic.*

MATT: Yeah, exactly. They've always been more like pictograms.

LANG: *You've been hanging out with Seth and Chester Brown lately. How have they been influencing you?*

MATT: I'm too biased because they're good friends now, but I really think they may be the two best working cartoonists today. I was a huge fan of Chester's before I even met him and his work is still a major influence. Both Chester and Seth use a lot of silent panels and I've never felt the freedom to use them because I was trying to cram so much onto a page, but now I feel like I can. They really do suck you into a story more than anything.

LANG: *You mention something about a lithograph last time we talked.*

MATT: Yeah, the three of us are doing a signing at a convention in New York and we did this lithograph for it. We each drew ourselves as old men







and the illustration is entitled "50 Years Down the Road." We're withered old men in rags and we look like complete bums and we're walking down a country road towards the poor house. I'm in the background, jumping up and down and screaming, "You sons of bitches! You told me there'd be money in comics!"

LANG: *Well, don't forget about Crumb. He's someone who hasn't sold out, but has managed to make a living doing comics. How do you think he does it?*

MATT: I don't know. I think he does it because he has to do it—he's driven to do them. Crumb is one of the few, rare exceptions. He hasn't peaked somewhere in his career and started to go downhill. He's continually going uphill. Not all of his work is great, but, every now and then, there's a little gem.

LANG: *Everything you write about happened to you, one way or the other. Even though I know that, I feel like the Joe Matt in the comics is a character.*

MATT: A caricature.

LANG: *Yeah, a caricature. What do you think about him? How is he different from you?*

MATT: Everything is definitely exaggerated—the writing and the gestures—it's all been done for comedic effect. Now, partly because of the influence of Chester's current autobiographical work (in *Yummy Fur*) and some of Seth's autobiographical work (in *Palooka-ville*), I think I'm getting more mature.

When I write about my life, I exaggerate everything, though my friends don't think so. Seth read all the strips before we met and he though it was all an act. Now he says, "You really *are* like that. You really are cheap—you're worse than you draw yourself."

LANG: *How cheap are you, Joe?*

MATT: I've *got* to be cheap. I keep explaining this to people—it's not that I'm cheap, it's just that I have to make my money last or it's back to the salt mines doing super-hero comics or something.

LANG: *I assume that you're talking about when you used to do coloring for Comico.*

MATT: Yeah, I look back on that as just being one big mistake. If I had to work for money now, I'd think I'd rather unload a truck.

LANG: *I'm looking at* Drawn & Quarterly *#3, the strip about Death. Is this the sort of thing you were talking about moving towards?*

MATT: Not really. That sort of strip, that was more an attempt to express what I often feel—an awareness of my body. It probably came from watching too many Woody Allen movies that week and reading Crumb's mid-life crisis stories—the one where he's unable to get out of bed.

LANG: *What about Joe Matt, the child? When did you first become aware of comics?*

MATT: I guess I was six years-old or so. And I find that all this childhood stuff—there's no escaping it, it stays with you forever, the stuff you loved as a child. I loved Dr. Seuss books and I can attribute my interest in his work with my love for line. When I see illustrations these days, the things I like have line in them. So, Dr. Seuss was important. I guess *Donald Duck* was my first comic.

LANG: *The Barks stuff?*

MATT: Yeah, at a real early age I was able to distinguish Barks' work. Probably the biggest thing in my life, the thing that changed my life was my first collection of *Peanuts*. I can distinctly remember being around seven when my father gave me the first *Peanuts* collection, the first two or three years of the daily strip. That was really influential.

LANG: *Who besides Schulz was an influence?*

MATT: I think Schulz and Robert Crumb were my two biggest influences. [*Laughter*] My two biggest loves are on opposite ends of the spectrum and I'm constantly fighting with myself about which direction to go into. I can't see Schulz appreciating Crumb's work, but I can see Crumb appreciating Schulz's.

LANG: *I bet he'd at least appreciate the economy and the structure. I'm sure he'd think the content was pure bourgeois.*

MATT: *Peanuts* is very theological. There are two books, *The Gospel According to Peanuts* and *The Parables of Peanuts*, that talk about how Schulz is preaching away in these comics. I think Schulz's work is too often ignored by modern cartoonists and it's a shame. Maybe the vast merchandising has had an effect.

LANG: *What do you think of Bill Watterson?*

MATT: I like his earlier work—his brush line more than anything. His art is just wonderful, but I've just started reading Crockett Johnson's *Barnaby* and I enjoy that much more.

LANG: *Describe* Barnaby *for the uninitiated.*

MATT: It's about this boy named Barnaby who has a fairy godfather named Mr. O'Malley who Barnaby's parents thinks he imagines. The fairy godfather is this little braggart—an inept, bumbling kind of guy. Barnaby doesn't really do anything in the stories.

LANG: *He says, "Gosh" a lot.*

MATT: That's right. Mostly, Mr. O'Malley fools himself into thinking he does things that only happen by accident. Right from the beginning *Barnaby* was great, right from the word go. It's one of the few things that functions on a child's level and an adult level. It's really more like an ongoing children's book than anything.

LANG: *Tell me about your book fetish.*

MATT: It's a curse. Constantly wanting new books, craving new books, buying new books, and then getting rid of some that I used to like. It just drives me crazy that my tastes never settle down.

LANG: *What have you been looking at these days?*

MATT: I've been looking at some children's books by Raymond Briggs. He was a British illustrator who did a book called *Father Christmas*. It begins with Santa Claus waking up on Christmas Eve and it shows him in all kinds of mundane scenes like Santa putting his slippers on, making tea, and, in one scene, Santa Claus is on the toilet. It's really tastefully done, but the book is full of this stuff. He also did *Fungus the Boogie Man* and some others.

LANG: *Another collection to work on.*

MATT: Yeah, another collection. ●



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Hormones, nostalgia and self-incrimination are a few Matt's favorite things.





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AN IMPERFECT WORLD WHERE CLOTHES GET DIRTY



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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

INFERNAL GALL

DANCES WITH WOLVERINES

by Adam-Troy Castro

Hi, there.

Some of you may be familiar with the ancient chinese curse: "May you have an *interesting* life."

Well, somewhere along the line I must have pissed off some Mandarins, because I sure as hell had an *interesting* month.

The culprit was Hurricane Bob. In a manner eerily reminiscent of those old Lee/Ditko Spider-Man villains who used to show up at the worst possible moment, their shadows looming from off-panel as the web-slinger shouted, "No, not you! It can't be—*you!*" just as the next-issue blurb cut in to keep you from finding out just who the heck it was, Bob just swooped down out of nowhere and ripped down all the power lines on my block, creating a power surge that fried just about every major electronic appliance in my home. . .including not only the TV and the stereo, which would have been bad enough. . .but also my obsolete old Apple //E, which I needed to access the disks which contained *everything* I'd written in the last ten years. Dozens of short stories, many hefty novel fragments, articles, last month's column—it was all trapped in limbo. Gone. Kaput. Hostage to fate.

To say I panicked is a mild understatement. I went apes**t, is what I did.

With the help of some good friends, I did manage to get it all back, eventually. But the recovery process was especially odious because the new computer I bought failed less than 24 hours after I first plugged it in—a sad twist of fate that, in retrospect, is difficult *not* to attribute to the salesman's startling, in fact uncannily exact, physical resemblance to Jim Shooter. I swear to God I'm not making this up. They could have been twins. But I gave him my credit card anyway, and when the machine dropped dead it was hard not to imagine a secret cabal of bitter comics creators infiltrating electronics stores all across the nation just on the off-chance that I'd walk on and hand them the opportunity to make my life difficult.

Like I said, it's been an *interesting* month.

But it's over now. . .and to inaugurate my new *new* computer, purchased from a salesman who looked nothing at all like Jim Shooter, let's devote yet another essay to Just What's Wrong With Super-Heroes.



The Disappearance of the Smile

That's right. The Smile.

Don't be surprised. super-heroes do smile occasionally, you know. These days they tend to spend most of their time tightly grimacing, like folks suffering from intense stomach cramps . . . but if you search a month's worth of Marvels cover-to-cover you might be able to find one or two instances where the tortured, introspective hero actually permits himself an amused grin. Of course, in almost every case, the tortured introspective hero will be grinning only because he's beating up the corrupt, sociopathic villain, but even so, his grin comes as welcome relief from his grimace, which is stretched so tight that you could probably rent out his jaw for a T-square.

Still, I'm not talking about the twisted, sadistic smile. I'm talking about the bright, sunshiny smile worn by friendly folks who enjoy being alive, and are happy to see you. The kind of smile that makes you happy to know them in return.

We ain't seen much of that on super-hero faces lately. But it used to be the norm. Granted, even back in the '40s

and '50s, long-underwear characters were permitted to experience pain, suffering, self-doubt, and even angst (if only momentarily, within the context of individual stories, and certainly not to the same extremes they do today), but these characters were *also* permitted to show a friendly face to their intended audience, in what, for the sake of argument, we'll call the generic image.

Take the original Captain Marvel, for instance. The typical generic C.C. Beck drawing might have shown him flying through the air, or waving an American flag, or even just standing with his hands on his hips while his cape flapped in the ever-present convenient breeze. . . but the expression on his face rarely changed. It was almost always a gentle, unthreatening smile.

To children, that smile said, Hello, kids. I'm glad to see you. We're going to go on an adventure together. Parts of it might be scary, but not any scarier than you want it to be.

Meanwhile, to older readers, that smile said, Yeah, I know this stuff is silly. How can I *not* realize this is silly? But let's have a good time anyway.

Captain Marvel was not alone in showing this face to his audience. So did Superman. Throughout the '40s and '50s, the comics he appeared in sported covers which showed him having fun with his superpowers; the stories frequently ended with Clark Kent winking at the reader as Lois, Jimmy, and Perry talked about how great Superman was. That wink was as much a part of the Superman milieu as Krypton or the Fortress of Solitude. Like Captain Marvel's grin, it brought the reader into the hero's confidence. It said, Gee, aren't we having fun, and isn't it just great that you and I can share this secret together?

Then there was Batman; he might have started out, and ended up, an obsessed creature-of-the-night (and I do actually prefer that interpretation of the character), but for decades after Robin showed up, the dark knight was positively jovial. Oh, he could still grit his teeth with determination whenever faced with a particularly thorny challenge, but once the battle was over and the bad guys were behind bars, the smile returned to his face. The typical Batman story of the period ended with the dynamic duo (and frequently the avuncular Commissioner Gordon) enjoying a laugh about the wonderful adventure they'd just shared. It mattered little that the adventures were often wildly ridiculous and that the jokes could only be appreciated by the unsophisticated ten-year-olds who back then comprised the greatest percentage of the readership: what mattered, again, is that the characters seemed to be having a good time, and that the reader was implicitly being invited to tag along.

Think also of the original Kid Eternity, who despite being dead seemed to be having the time of his life. Or the original Flash, running into a panel so fast he left afterimages behind him, and *waving*. Or a character few of you have heard of, namely an almost-forgotten Flash knockoff named Johnny Quick—this guy smiled so widely, throughout his appearances, that he seemed about to break into giggles at any moment.

I'm not saying that all of the period's characters were Care Bears. Dark and gritty did exist back then; even at their lightest, the Spectre and the pulp-magazine Shadow weren't exactly barrels of laughs. Even Captain Marvel had his moments of (relative) high drama. But when these characters appeared in advertisements, or in publicity materials, or on posters or pin-ups. . . they were usually smiling. Because they were supposed to be nice folks. The big brothers (and in scattered cases, sisters) the readers secretly wished they had.



I firmly believe that these friendly expressions were a major component in the appeal of these characters. And I know I'm not the only person who sees that—because if I was the last decade-and-a-half of Superman movies wouldn't have gone out of their way to end each film with Christopher Reeve smiling in orbit. And Bob Kane wouldn't be still responding to requests for Batman sketches (on those occasions when he both agrees to do it, and doesn't have his Todd MacFarlane swipe file handy), not with pictures of a grim, obsessed vigilante who's probably ground all the enamel off the cutting edges of his teeth, but with pictures of a friendly-looking Batman and a friendly-looking Robin.

The smile started to decline with the dawn of Marvel Comics. And I'm not saying that for the same reason Gary Groth would. Lee and Kirby and Ditko and Romita and the rest of the gang produced a lot of crap in their time, but a lot of it was fun crap, and much of it was great crap. A debatable percentage even escaped being crap altogether. No; I'm saying the smile declined simply because in the age of Marvel there simply wasn't room for it. It was hard to do it in the context of the stories because all the characters came equipped with a litany of soap-opera problems, in which a closing wink at the reader would only serve to dispel the alleged impression that these were realistic people with realistic problems.

But even outside the context of these stories—in house ads, posters, pin-ups and other merchandising—the smile wasn't much easier to do, because by and large the characters weren't designed for it. Daredevil could smile winsomely, and often did. So did '40s holdover Captain America, and three out of the four members of the Fantastic Four. But Iron Man faced the world through slits. The Hulk didn't look like the Hulk unless he was shouting. Thor was usually pictured shouting too, only (presumably) in Elizabethan. The Silver Surfer wouldn't know how to smile if you gave him a manual.

As for Marvel's most popular character, Spider-Man. . .well, as we all know, he wore a full-face mask that completely hid his features from view. The better artists made it more expressive than it had any right to be, but it was still just a mask, with all of a mask's dramatic limitations. Stan Lee recognized this himself, in an early issue of Daredevil, where the blind guy essentially asked the webslinger if he was too much of a sourpuss to take a joke. Spidey said, "How do you know I'm not smiling, under my mask?" It was a good question. And the answer was: you couldn't.



Still, the early Marvels did manage to convey that sense of exuberance, most of the time, and express smiles even when smiles couldn't be specifically shown. The members of the Fantastic Four appeared, both together and separately, in "autographed" pin-ups which showed them happily waving at the reader; Spider-Man was often *understood* to be having a good time even though he had only body language to express it. Captain America was like your favorite uncle, and Daredevil could be downright jolly. Please note again that I'm not specifically talking about the stories themselves, which often gave these characters reason to whine about their terrible lives; I'm talking about the generic illustrations, which were designed to depict them as friendly, approachable, unpretentious, and fun—in theory, exactly the sort of folks young readers wouldn't mind spending time with.

Now walk into your friendly neighborhood comics shop, look at the posters on the walls and the life-size cardboard cutouts in the aisles, and discover the kind of face we like to put on our heroes today:

Wolverine: caught in mid-leap, his razor-sharp claws already crimson from some past kill, and his face contorted in a mask of dark animalistic bloodlust.

The Punisher: backed up against the wall, bleeding from about a dozen separate wounds, firing great big guns with both hands, and screaming in hatred and rage.

Lobo: the dull, vacuous, offended face of a thug who's just perceived an insult and now wants to bash your face in.

Even, astonishingly enough, Superman: the image being used to promote him now is suddenly not the friendly, unthreatening big brother type we've seen in classic portrayals by Curt Swan, Neal Adams, and even John Byrne. No. Now, Superman is mad. The first issue of his new title opened with a cover that showed him wearing the kind of pissed-off scowl that would be perfectly at home on the face of a drunken college football player about to beat up the rival for his girlfriend's affections. The scowl appeared again on house ads plugging the Superman line. You'll probably see it again, in other places, by the time this installment sees print.

It matters little to the marketing geniuses who decided this image would sell lots of comics that just about the only trait that renders the post-Crisis Superman interesting at all is his unapologetic squareness—his decency, his loving relationship with his parents, his midwestern way of thinking, and his strong sense of right and wrong. These are the same traits that once made him hilariously bland and colorless, and they now make him (if not his rather belabored line of comics) a breath of fresh air in a genre increasingly dominated by sadists and sociopaths. But these days that doesn't matter: these days we just want to see somebody kick ass. Hard. And so we have the scowl, which promised a readership increasingly disinterested in anything *but* the glorified excesses of self-righteous sociopaths, that *this* Man of Steel ain't a woose anymore.

What's frightening about this is not the way our hero-figures have been corrupted—after all, they're just lines on paper, and they've only been

altered to bring them in line with what we expect of them. No. What's frightening is that *we've* been corrupted. We've become the kind of people who, when asked the choose the qualities we want in our heroes, eschew nobility, or self-sacrifice, or high principles; we even reject charismatic personalities and friendly smiles. Instead we totemize being the toughest, roughest, and meanest guy on the block. The guy who doesn't smile, but instead grimaces with pleased bloodthirsty anticipation of all the butt he's gonna stomp.

That's the guy we want to be with. The guy we want to *be*.

And whatever he's called this month, he ain't the dark, gritty underbelly of the obsessed urban vigilante.

We are.

And Now, For All You Collectors Out There, Seven Separate Editions of My Comments on *X-Men* #1

Version #1: You know, X-MEN #1 really sucked.

Version #2: I'm not surprised it sucked, but I mean this.

Version #3: It really bit the big fat wiener. Big time.

Version #4: Of course, the fact that it sucked doesn't really matter, because its overwhelming success was more a triumph of clever marketing and a collector's mentality as conditioned as a Pavlovian shar-pei . . . but gad. It sucked.

Version #5: And what really sucked about it was going into comic book shops and seeing its overmerchandised ass thirty-deep, twelve across, on half a dozen shelves—shelves that could have been taken up by any number of superior comics that instead never got a chance to be seen, or sold, or read. Comics that might now go out of print because so many foolish people think they can get rich by speculating against a market that's largely in their minds—a market manufactured, and then deliberately glutted, just to make a quick killing off their naivete and greed.

Version #6: Boy, did that suck.

Version #7: I'm depressed.

This is about as far as it goes, smile-wise, nowadays.



An Urgent Appeal for Aid

Meanwhile, somebody out there can do me a major favor. I recently met legendary comics figure Julius Schwartz at the World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago, and had a very pleasant conversation with him, based on the prolific letterhacking I used to do for his titles during the late seventies. Eventually I told him that I wrote a monthly column for this magazine, which he says he gets every month but evidently doesn't read very closely, because he then asked me what sort of things I write about. I foolishly told him I was particularly proud of my recent column on erotic comics. The conversation cooled rapidly after that, alas, and it wasn't until much later (this being a crowded and noisy party) that I applied logic to his reaction and realized I'd given him the impression I produce pornography myself.

Will somebody out there, with direct access to Julie Schwartz's ear, tell him that the column in question was largely *anti*-pornography? And that even if I *was* a rank purveyor of stroke books, and not a nice Jewish boy who would never get involved with such things, I wouldn't be stupid enough to deliberately brag about it to Julie Schwartz, of all people?

I mean, Jeez. I was practically weaned on his comics, dammit.

Oh, well. Special thanks this month, for reasons ranging from compliments given to helping hands offered to good times shared to generally nice stuff done, go out to Frances "Muffin" Spielman, R.J. Facara, Geoffrey A. Landis, William F. Wu, Hy Bender, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Dean Wesley Smith, Tad Williams, Edward Bryant, Avril Hordyk, Michael Brady, D. Edward Bungert, Lawrence Person, Bob Garcia, and Liz Looker, who has said she's really tired of hearing this, but really earns her last name. [*Yes, but does Lawrence?—TH*] Most of these people probably don't read this rag and therefore won't get to see these thanks, but that's okay; everybody can benefit from a few invisible good vibes floating around in the aether. As for the title "Dances With Wolverines"—well, it doesn't have any particular relevance to this installment. I just thought it looked cool. Sorry.

Next Month

Len Wein's place among The Great Thinkers of Our Time! Plus, a response to Donna Barr's "Perspective" from *AH* #194 . . . and if we have room, even more vials of leftover phlogiston . . . in "There But For Fortune Cookies!" See you then . . . and Happy Holidays! ●

ANDY MANGELS BACKSTAGE

SPIDER-MAN, SPIDER-MAN

Thanks for letting me know what you want in this column in our first Backstage poll. While letters are still coming in and we'll see the results next month, deadlines await, so I'll be going ahead with this column as normal. Now, on to the news and a few reviews!

Feature Films

As reported here for the last several months, and confirmed in *USA Today*, James Cameron will write, produce, and direct *Spider-Man* for Carolco. The movie is expected to be years away (Christmas 1993 is projected), and casting for Spidey is expected to be a search among unknown actors, a la Chris Reeve's Superman.

According to *Billboard* Hulk Hogan may soon star in *Zamindar*, a futuristic thriller supposedly based on a comic book Clyde Ware created for Innovation Publishing. However, Innovation has never published *Zamindar*, and are only in early negotiations on the project. Despite this, Jim Rowe (*Prince of Tides*) and George Litto (*Dressed to Kill*) are looking to produce the film.

Honey, I Blew Up The Baby, has wrapped filming, with most of the orginal cast returning. Look for it next summer.

Stephen King's SleepWalkers will be released by Columbia Pictures next Spring. Starring Alice Krige, Brian Krause, and Madchen Amick, the film will also feature cameo appearances by Clive Barker, Stephen King, Tobe Hooper and a few other famous faces of horror!

Lucky Luke, based on the French comic series by Morris and Goscinny, has been a hit as a film, and a 13-episode European TV series. Directed by Terence Hill as the title character (Screenplay by Lori *Hill*. Any relation?), the film has opened in Germany, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. No U.S. or British release is planned yet, though Canada is on the release schedule for 1992. Also starring are Nancy Morgan and Ron Carey.

Title of the month: *The Gerasene Demoniac*, now filming in New York. No, I don't know what it means, either. Runner-Up: *Flodder Does Manhattan*.

Filming is almost done for *Hellraiser III: Hell On Earth*, directed by Tony Hickox. Written by Peter Atkins, Doug Bradley will return as Pinhead, and even Ashley Laurence makes a cameo appearance as Kirstie. Creator Clive Barker's staying out of this one, with the honorary title of Executive Producer.

Meanwhile, Barker's busy on other films, both as writer and director. A science-fictioner called *Eden USA* for Universal is next on his schedule, then probably *The Last Illusion*, (from his *Cabal* short story with magical detective Harry D'Amour) for A&M Films. After that will be the remake of *The Mummy* for Universal, co-written with Mick Garris.

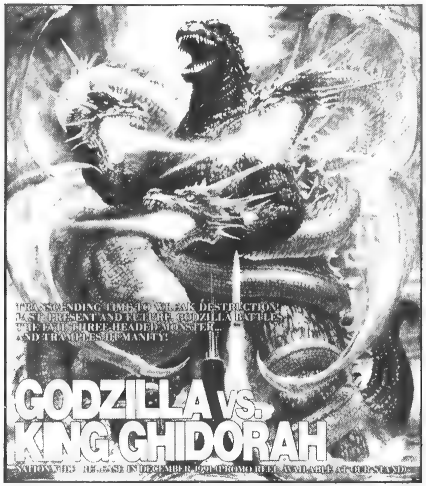
No news on *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III*, due to start filming next year for a Christmas 1992 release!

Universal is developing a feature film based on *The Munsters*, banking on the success of Paramount's *The Addams Family*. Due to *The Munsters'* international TV audience, the project could move very quickly.

Godzilla's newest film (his 13th, I think) is *Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah*. Blurbs for the film promise: "Transcending time to wreak destruction! Past, present and future, Godzilla battles the evil three-headed monster. . . and tramples humanity!" I guess this implies that having three heads is evil, while destroying cities and trampling humanity is not? A December Japan release will have passed by now, but New York and Los Angeles releases are in planning stages.

Warner Brothers has created a new merchandising division, Worldwide Consumer Products (no relation to *Robocop*'s Omni Consumer Products), which will market all of its licenses. If you get to Burbank, go to the Warner lot to see their Warner store (possibly to become a major franchise) or order their nice free full-color catalogue at 1-800-223-6524.

Godzilla returns!!!





From Ralph Bakshi's new feature, *Cool World*.

It's still got *Batman* and *Flash* items, even in its Christmas catalogue, as well as tons of other neat gadgets and *Looney Tune* items.

The American Film Market is where everyone trots out their releases for film or video over the next year, and there are lots of schlocky fantasy/sci-fi/horror titles among them. A sampling includes: *Alienators* ("Pray they don't find you."), *Piranha 3* ("From the depths of the sea the ultimate in terror."), *The Ungodly* (the devil unleashed by occult-dabbling couple), *Nudist Colony of the Dead* (nudist ghosts haunt a church that closed their colony), *Dark Harvest* (scarecrows vs. hikers), *976-Evil II: The Astral Factor* (maniacal principal terrorizes town), *Basket Case 3: The Progeny, Slave Master, The Dwelling* ("sexy horror movie"), *XTRO II, The Reluctant Vampire* (with Adam Ant and Judy Tenuta), and *Son Of Darkness* ("My adopted son is a vampire!"). Not to miss an already-passed boat, there's also *The Legend of Robin Hood* (JEF Film's "true" story of the Sherwood outlaw), and *The Ribald Tales of Robin Hood* (starring Dee Lockwood, Danielle Carver, and Bambi Allen. Who plays Robin Hood in this lusty film?)

Still no news on an American *Captain America* release. It's now out on video in Italy though.

The Watchmen re-write by Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo is still being worked on. It's due Christmas at the Largo Entertainment offices. Meanwhile, Bilson and DeMeo have entered into an exclusive pact with Hollywood Pictures to write, produce, and direct films. Bilson will probably do all the directing. The first on the slate will be *G-Men*, a '20s action picture set in San Francisco. Other projects include Edwin Mullhouse (about a teen suicide from Steven Millhauser's book) and *Hot Rods*. This latter movie, set in a stylized '50s, will be written by Howard Chaykin and John Moore.

Okay, we've got the roles for Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula: The Untold Story* right now. Gary Oldman *is* Count Dracula, Winona Ryder is Lucy, Anthony Hopkins is Van Helsing, Bill Campbell (*Rocketeer*) is Quincy, Cary Elwes (*Princess Bride*) is Holmwood, Keanu Reeves (*Bill & Ted*) is Jonathan Harker, rock-star Tom Waits is Renfield, and I don't know who Sadie Frost is. Currently filming, the pic is due out mid-1992.

Joe Dante will direct *Mr. Twister* for Universal. The science fiction thriller is written by Neil Ruttenberg, late of the endless *Spider-Man* drafts floating around for ten years of so. Dante also has a project called *Dinosaurs Attack*, which may or may not have anything to do with the well-known card sets.

The Rocketeer seems to be a universal bomb. The latest country it crash-landed in was Italy, where it made only $40,000 in a whopping total of ten theatres. Despite *The Rocketeer*'s almost-total monetary failure, Disney Studios has optioned *Wild Cards* as a potential film. This, coupled with their negotiations on the long-awaited *Fantastic Four* film lead one to hope that Disney has not given up on big-budget comic movies.

Evil Toons is a new Fred Olen Ray picture in which college girls cleaning a mansion unleash a ghost and a demonic cartoon! The similarly titled *Stay Tuned* is Morgan Creek's special-effects look into the devil's TV network, starring *Hero At Large*'s John Ritter.

The dark Caliber/Tundra series *The Crow*, created by Jim O'Barr, is in development as a film. Ed Pressman is producer, with a script by John Shirley. Alex Proyas may direct.

Prince Valiant, currently a star of the small screen, will make his big screen bow soon, if Bernd Eichinger's Constantin Films has his way. Writers Michael Beckner and Jim Gorman are working on a big-budget modernized remake for the Prince.

Speed Racer is waiting for a script at Silver Pictures. Patrick Johnson is polishing it off now.

Aliens III has been pushed back all the way to May 22nd, even though the extensive reshoots to strengthen the picture (which would have added $17 million to the already over-blown $40 million budget!) were cancelled. Insiders say the film should have the reshoots, as it's not going to live up to the first two films. Executives say that the film is fine, just experiencing some filming problems. Next issue, you can find out what *Aliens III* is about when I review the script!



I'm not quite sure what *Cool World* is, other than a new animated/live action film from Ralph Bakshi, Frank Mancuso, Jr., and Paramount Pictures. Due out sometime next year, it's got the coolest teaser press kit you'll ever find. Kind of a twisted diamond-shaped box opens up to a picture of a hand writing "This is my world. Welcome to it. I'm Jack Deebs." The triangle-shaped pictures inside reveal a bizarre world of "noids" (humans) and "doodles" (cartoons) that apparently live in different planes of reality.

There's Holli Would, Queen of Cool World, the Slash Club Denizens (Coolest of the cool), the wichins (goon wannabes), and the poppers (border patrol cops between Sweet Place and Cool World). What all this means, I'm not sure, and Paramount representatives say it's too early to leak information. I'll let you know more as I know it.

Freddy Krueger was laid to rest on October 31st in a Hollywood cemetery. I was in attendance to give the main eulogy and pay final respects along with dozens of movie stars, directors, and press. I was interviewed and appeared for a week on E! Entertainment Television (a national cable network), as well as the local NBC news. Both plugged the *Nightmares on Elm Street* comic I write for Innovation, showing the covers to the first two issues. In meetings with New Line executives the next day, the discussion led to whether or not there would be another Freddy movie. The answer... no. *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* is the final film in the series.

Batman Returns

Last issue I stated that "*Batman Returns* has been every gossip columnist's dream." To that, a Warner representative added "and every publicist's nightmare!" Due to extreme secrecy on the project, magazine and newspaper reporters are seizing every scrap of news available.

Batman Returns has a new screenwriter. Wesley Strick (*Cape Fear*), whom a Hollywood executive friend of mine called "one of the most overrated over-paid hacks working today" has reworked Dan Waters' (*Heathers*) script, months into shooting the film. I've tried to reach Dan Waters, but with no luck, and Warner has that irrepressible "no comment."

During the last week of pre-production, a 15-minute presentation film was produced for comic conventions. It features interviews with Tim Burton, designer Bo Welch, makeup man Stan Winston, and creative consultant Bob Kane. The promotional film introduces the concepts and characters of *Returns*, showing things like the makeup for Penguin's nose and some of the redesigns for Batman's armor. It also showed designs for the Bat-Ski Boat. (No, I'm not kidding. They're filming these scenes on the Unversal lot.)

In terms of casting, here's what's what:

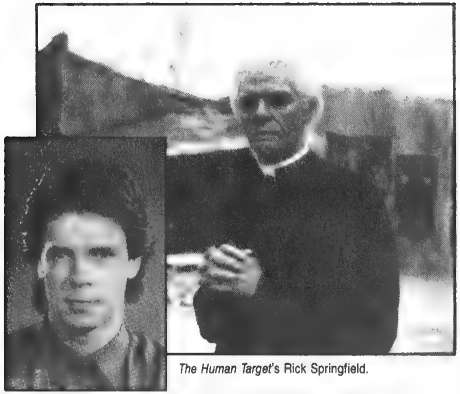
Marlon Wayans' role was cut from the film before filming, as his scenes were deemed unnecessary. He never worked on the film.

One more time, emphatically from Warner publicists: *Robin is not in the film*. Despite notices in Diamond's *Previews* catalog for January, attributed to Kenner, Robin does not appear. The Tim Drake/Robin action figure is based on the comic Robin, as is the action figure of the Penguin. No news on whether the upcoming Catwoman action figure will be the movie version or not.

Paul (Pee-Wee Herman) Reuben's cameo role will be unnamed character who is the father of Oswald Cobblepot, better known as The Penguin. Negotiations, still up in the air when this was first reported, are finished.

Danny DeVito plays the Penguin, who runs for the mayorship of Gotham. In *Blockbuster Video Magazine*, Danny DeVito is quoted as saying "Everything looks great! This is gonna be terrific! The Penguin is going to be like nothing you've ever seen in your life! It just outrageous, man. This guy Burton is really terrific!"

Michelle Pfeiffer is the Catwoman. Michael Murphy (*Tanner '88, Manhattan*) is the current Mayor of Gotham City. Jan Hooks (of *Saturday Night Live* and *Designing Women*) is an associate of the Penguin's, while Christopher Walken plays Max Schreck, a millionaire who supports Pengy. I don't have any information on who or what parts Cristi Conaway



The Human Target's Rick Springfield.

(*Doc Hollywood*), Vincent Schiavelli (*Ghosts*), Steve Witting, or Andrew Bryniarski play.

Video Releases

Turner Broadcasting System has purchased Hanna-Barbera for $320 million, gaining the entire video library of over 3,000 half-hour animated episodes from 350-plus series, plus telefilms, specials, and movies. TBS plans a new animated cable network which would show the Hanna-Barbera material almost non-stop. TBS also takes over all video rights from WorldVision Enterprises. Video releases will continue, though it's unclear whether they'll be from Hanna-Barbera video, TBS-video, or a new merger-titled company. Does this mean we'll finally see *The Thing* cartoons on video?

Full Moon Entertainment has a host of new direct-to-video releases which will also be direct-to-comic, thanks to Malibu's licensing deal. Upcoming are: *Invisible* (a man uses the power of invisibility to fight crime), *Mandroid* (a man transfers his consciousness into an android), *Trancers III* (Jack Deth is back), *Shadow Over Insmouth* (man falls in love with fishy woman), *Doctor Modrid* (otherworldly scientist must stop invasion), and *Bad Channels* (an alien beams beautiful women back to his planet). Sounds like they cribbed a bunch of plots from old DC *Strange Adventures* to me. Can anyone identify the issue numbers and stories?

The Rocketeer will be released on video and laserdisk in February, though no price has been set. The producers are hopng for a "sell-through" (cheap) price rather than a rental (expensive) price. Given their marketing lately, it seems likely Disney may go for the sell-through.

Networks

Black Lightning has been optioned for a TV series by Lorimar television. No news other than that.

George Lucas' *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* will premiere in February as both a movie-of-the-week and a Dark Horse comic! The first film/comic will find a young Indy meeting Lawrence of Arabia in the wild deserts of Egypt and in a confrontation with Pancho Villa! Teddy Roosevelt will be a guest-star in a future film. *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* will be on ABC, and in overseas theatrical release.

Ramy Zada is still in the dark until February 1992 on CBS's *Dark Justice*. Having finished the first 22 episodes, Zada will be replaced for the second season. Searches for a new lead are underway, but neither Michael Woods nor Parker Stevenson will be it (last month I reported that possibility). Look for Clayton Prince, who plays Jericho Gibson, to break into a more major role on the series in the second year.

Although no formal announcement has been made, it is expected throughout the industry that NBC will drop its Saturday morning children's lineup next Fall. Basement ratings are to blame. Insiders note that NBC may produce pilots for shows designed to bridge the kid-vid/age gap; *Saved by the Bell* has been the only show to do so. If unsuccessful, NBC will cut Saturday morning shows to one hour or remove them completely from the schedule.

On the good news front for Saturday mornings, *Garfield* (season five), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (season three), and *Mother Goose & Grimm* (season two) have all gotten extremely early pick-ups for Fall 1992 season.

The long-awaited *Two-Fisted Tales* will finally see airing on the Fox Network at the end of November (tentatively) as a one-hour special, packaging the two-half hour stories. "Showdown" is scripted by Frank Darabout and directed by *Superman*'s Richard Donner, while "King of the Road" is written by J. Randall Johnson and directed by Tom Holland. There are no plans to continue the series, despite earlier plans to franchise the series out like *Tales From The Crypt*. Plans for a *Weird Science* franchise have completely stalled as well.

Speaking of the good *Crypt* and its keeper, the fourth season will go into production in February for another 12 episodes. Expect them to premiere summer 1992.

Both CBS and Pet Fly Productions have said there are no plans for any *Flash* reunion movies or episodes. Sorry fans. It didn't even sound as if massive petitions would help.

NBC has given Universal the go-ahead on the upcoming gay episode of *Quantum Leap*, but not without major script revisions. NBC claimed to not be worrying about lost ad revenue from gay themes (as reported last issue), but about the issues of teen suicide in the episode. As we go to press, NBC has nixed a gay-themed episode of *Sisters*, which I believe reveals their true feelings about the much-debated *Quantum Leap*. As I said last month, just call NBC the No-Balled Censors.

ABC's *Human Target* star Rick Springfield has a few new co-stars. Christopher Chance's helpers are: Kirk Baltz (returning as Philos Marsden), Signy Coleman (replacing Frances Fisher as Libby), and Sami Chester (replacing Clarence Clemons as Jeff Carlyle). The series will have a possible January premiere as a mid-season replacement; if not January, it will premiere in April. There will be seven total episodes, including the pilot shot last year.

The *Human Target* pilot, reviewed in *AH* #188, will air as one of the seven episodes, though not the premiere episode. All the scenes with the old cast members will be re-shot to include the new cast. Additionally, the interior of the Blackwing will be changed, though Michael Kaluta's design for the outside of the ship will stay the same.

The seven *Human Target* episodes are: "Mirror Image," written by Thania St. John; "Second Chance," written by Rick Natkin, and guest-starring David Carradine, R. Lee Ermy, and Felton Perry; "Going Home," written by Don Carlos Dunaway; "Cool Hand Chance," written by Scott Richardson and guest-starring Billy Williams, Tom Dahlgren, and Ben Mittleman; "Chances Are," written by Howard Chaykin and John Francis Moore, and guest-starring Mike Genovesee, George Chakiris, Lisa Zane, and Michael Harris; "Designed by Chance," written by Kevin Droney, and guest-starring *The Flash* himself, John Wesley Shipp; and "Unnamed Pilot," written by Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo.



Metallo (Michaell Callan), Odessa (Justina Vail), & Luthor (Sherman Howard) from *Superboy*'s "Threesome" episode.

The long-awaited and long-missing *DNAgents* has been placed with a known production company, and has picked up interest at a network. Though tight-lipped until the project had picked up more steam, Mark Evanier admits that it is very close to his and Will Meugniot's orignal concept, as seen in the various Eclipse series.

Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventures is not dead as a TV series. Warner is producing seven episodes, which are expected to be mid-season replacements. New young actors portray the time-travellin' dudes.

Syndication

The very funny *For Better Or For Worse* comic strip by Lynn Johnston may soon be a series The Canadian Lacewood Productions is producing six half-hour specials.

Superboy's is almost halfway though its fourth and final season. All the December shows will be reruns: "The Kryptonite Kid" (Dec. 28), "The Basement" (Jan. 4), and "Darla Goes Ballistic" (Jan. 11). The next new episodes will be the two-part "To Be Human" (Jan. 18 and 25), which features the return of Bizarro (Barry Meyers) and Chaos. Then, the Boy of Steel flies "West of Alpha Centauri" (Feb. 1) and returns to fight a trio of villains (Lex Luthor, Metallo, and Odessa) in the two-part "Threesome" (Feb. 8 and 15).

Zooming through its second season, *SuperForce* goes for high ratings in February, though the January shows are all reruns. Upcoming episodes are "Love Slaves From Outer Space" (Dec. 28), "Light Around the Body" (Jan. 4), "Instant Karma" (Jan. 11), and "Hank's Back I & II" (Jan. 18 and 25). Zach Stone finds a very weird "Illegal Alien" (Feb. 1), before entering the two-part "Viral Staircase" (Feb. 8 and 15).

With *Prince Valiant* already sword-fighting his way along on the Family Channel, Hearst Entertainment was to develop a *Phantom* series based on Lee Falk's famous purple-clad "Ghost Who Walks." Twenty-Six half-hour episodes are planned.

Another animated project too possibly hit American shores is a four-part *3X3 Eyes* series, each episode a half-hour long. Innovation currently publishes the translated Japanese comic.

USA Network's *Swamp Thing* will premiere Friday, January 3rd, at 10:00 pm, with the first of fifty new episodes. Each episode is repeated the following Sunday at 6:00 pm. Returning are Dick Durock (Swamp Thing), Mark Lindsay Chapman (Dr. Arcane), Scott Garrison (Will Kipp), and Carrell Meyers (Tressa Kipp). Gone is Kari Wuhr (Abby Cable), though a new love interest for Swampy named Ann, has not been cast yet.

Upcoming *Swamp Thing* episodes, big on name guest-stars, include:

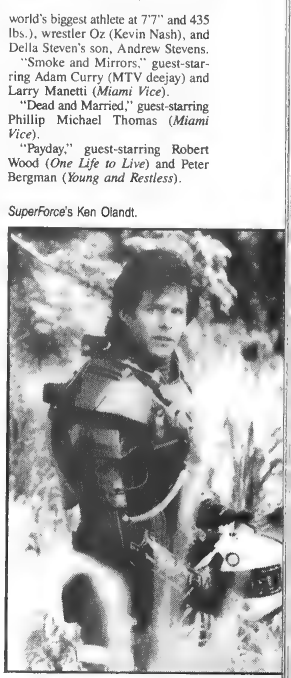
"This House of Mayans," guest-starring wrestler El Gigante (the world's biggest athlete at 7'7" and 435 lbs.), wrestler Oz (Kevin Nash), and Della Steven's son, Andrew Stevens.

"Smoke and Mirrors," guest-starring Adam Curry (MTV deejay) and Larry Manetti (*Miami Vice*).

"Dead and Married," guest-starring Phillip Michael Thomas (*Miami Vice*).

"Payday," guest-starring Robert Wood (*One Life to Live*) and Peter Bergman (*Young and Restless*).

SuperForce's Ken Olandt.





Bonus Script Reviews

HOOK:
The Return of the Captain

Revised First Draft—6/21/90—Written by Jim Hart and Nick Castle

Unlike my last review of *Judge Dredd*, I come to this script *biased*. *Peter & Wendy* (the modern-day *Peter Pan*) has always been my favorite children's story of all time. For those who don't know, I had been working on a *Peter & Wendy* adaptation with Craig Hamilton & Rick Bryant for three years at Eclipse. That series now resides at Tundra, which has scheduled the three-part graphic novel series for August 1993. In addition, I am several chapters into *my Peter Pan* sequel, which may see print in a book before its eventual comic adaptation. An adaptation of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* is already under negotiation.

Needless to say, I know *Peter Pan*, and I know Barrie. I also know he'll be rolling over in his grave when *Hook* comes out. On to the story. . . .

Wendy Darling is now an old woman (92), reliving her youth and donating money to help orphans and homeless children. Liza, the maid, is still alive and taking care of Wendy and Tootles (now a semi-retarded old man). Peter Banning (35) is flying back from New York, this time on a 747. You see, he's grown-up as well, and is now a stodgy lawyer who hates flying in airplanes, has forgotten his magical youth, and is married to Wendy's great-grand daughter, Moira Darling Banning (30). They have a boy, Jack (11) and a girl, Maggie (5).

It's explained in the story that Sir James Barrie was the Darling's neighbor, and when Wendy made up the Peter Pan stories, he wrote them down. Grown-up, Wendy became mother to scores of homeless children. While Peter, Moira, and Wendy are off at a dinner in honor of Wendy, Captain Hook comes to the nursery and steals away Jack and Maggie. Wendy tells Peter who and what he really is, and of course, he doesn't believe her, at least not until Tinker Bell returns to bring him back to Neverland so he can rescue his children.

Once there, after a shaky flight, Peter is found by the new Lost Boys, who don't believe he's the real Pan. They are: Ziggy (a Cheech and Chong type), Ace, Rufio (a Rastafarian who talks like an episode of *In Living Color*'s "Hey, Mon"). Rejected, Peter attempts to talk things over with Hook on his ship. Of course things don't go well, and Tink negotiates. She'll have Peter up to full fighting form within three days, to face Hook in an ultimate showdown, or Hook can kill him.

Peter is miserable in training for sword-fighting, flying, and the like. He can't let go of his adultness and think like a child, even with the help of three busty mermaids, the Lost Boys, or "Princess Ti" and her "Skins." Meanwhile, Hook is turning Jack away from his father and towards the pirate life. Eventually, as if we couldn't guess, Peter finds his "happy thoughts" and regains his youthful abilities. Now it's off to the NeverWar between Hook, the pirates, and Jack, and the forces of Neverland. Who wins?

Reading *Hook* was a strange and unfortunate experience. I wanted it to be wonderful, but from the start it seemed doomed. The very concept behind Peter Pan is of a little boy who doesn't grow up, of youth and magic, of being "gay and innocent and heartless." While "heartless" may describe this script, it only has as much heart as every other maudlin happy-ending Spielberg movie.

Deprived of its core story, it's not surprising that *Hook* abounds in contradictions of the Peter Pan mythos. Tink is called a "pixie," not a fairy; she even corrects Peter at one point. This is a holdover from the Disney film, wherein she was called a pixie because fairy had "negative gay connotations." As fairies were explained (in the book) to have short life spans and would fall down dead when people stopped believing in them, it stretches the myth to believe that Tink is still alive 80-plus years after Peter stopped believing in her. And while we're on age, Wendy is 92, while Liza the maid is taking care of her? Liza was an adult when Wendy was a child. This makes Liza over 100 years old!

The modern-day Lost Boys seem more like the vampiric Kiefer Sutherland-film *Lost Boys* than anything Barrie would write. The Rastafarian dialogue is alternatively stupid, offensive, or goofy. Hook's very existence is only partially explained; he survived his last encounter with the crocodile. How? Where has he been for the 80-plus years since he supposedly died? Why is Princess Tiger Lily now Princess "Ti"?

Due out this December from TriStar, *Hook* stars Robin Williams as Peter and Dustin Hoffman as Captain Hook. Maggie Smith is Wendy, Julia Roberts is a very non-glamorous Tinkerbell (actually, the one in the book was a "common" fairy), and Bob Hoskins is Smee. Steven Spielberg directs, a job originally intended for Nick Castle.

For purists, *Hook* is a remarkably mixed attempt to sequelize *Peter Pan*. Some of it is very faithful to the original, while other bits are blatantly awful and unfaithful. For those who believe the Disney version is the real story, less disappointment may be registered. If you believe in schmaltzy, happy endings, you *may* clap your hands. . . but if you believe that "all children, except one, grow up," this *Peter Pan* sequel *won't* fly into your heart.

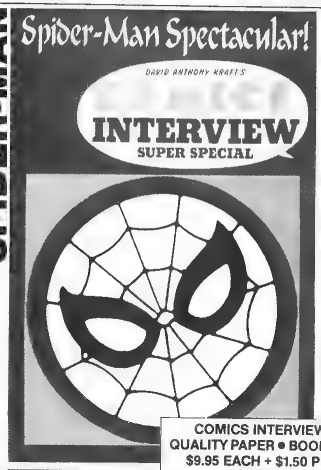
BACKSTAGE TO THE FUTURE

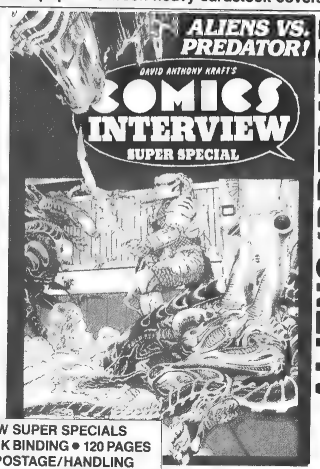
Next month, we'll catch up on the latest news, plus review the scripts for da-da-da-da! *Batman II* (by Sam Hamm) and *Aliens III!* Sounds like one heck of a great reason to be back here. And there's more hot stuff coming the month after, in our special pre-200 issue. But first, meet me here in *AH* #198. . . *Backstage!* ●

COMICS INTERVIEW SUPER SPECIALS

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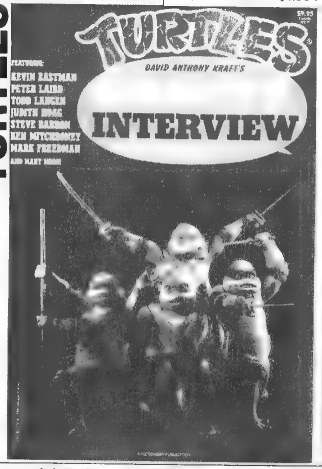


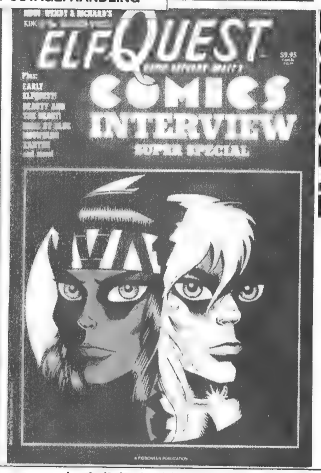


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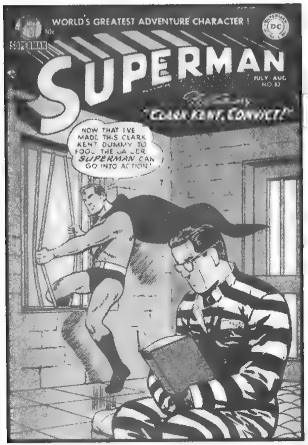
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Don Rosa's COVER GALLERY

For no particular reason whatsoever, here is a selection of comics covers with our heroes as prison inmates. *Superman* #83 shows us "Clark Kent, Convict"—note that "Clark" resembles a twice-convicted thief from some Iranian prison. On *Lois Lane* #6 we see Superman reaming out Lois because she's been making punk license plates in the Big House. The cover scene on *Adventure Comics* #301 is silly enough without any of my comments. I'll just admire it for its typically gorgeous Curt Swan art! Batman was tossed into the hoosegow in *Detective* #228. . . but that was nothing like Tommy Tomorrow's problem in being incarcerated in *Showcase* #44 (he was never released! Every time the warden looked at the record for the parole date, it would say "Tomorrow"). *Strange Adventures* #48 shows us a convict who decides he can do anything the policeman in *Terminator 2* can do. Finally, I offer you *Justice League of America* #22 and *Mystery in Space* #18 side by side; same writer and artist, perhaps?





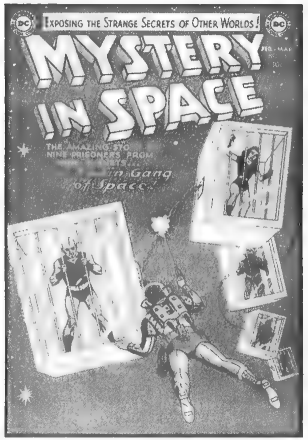












REviews

CEREBUS #150

Written and illustrated by DAVE SIM and GERHARD. Published by AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, INC.

Sometimes it's harder to write a positive review than to write a negative one. With a negative review, one can at least pick out (and pick on) those aspects of a comic that are poorly executed. But what can you say when a comic is very nearly perfect?

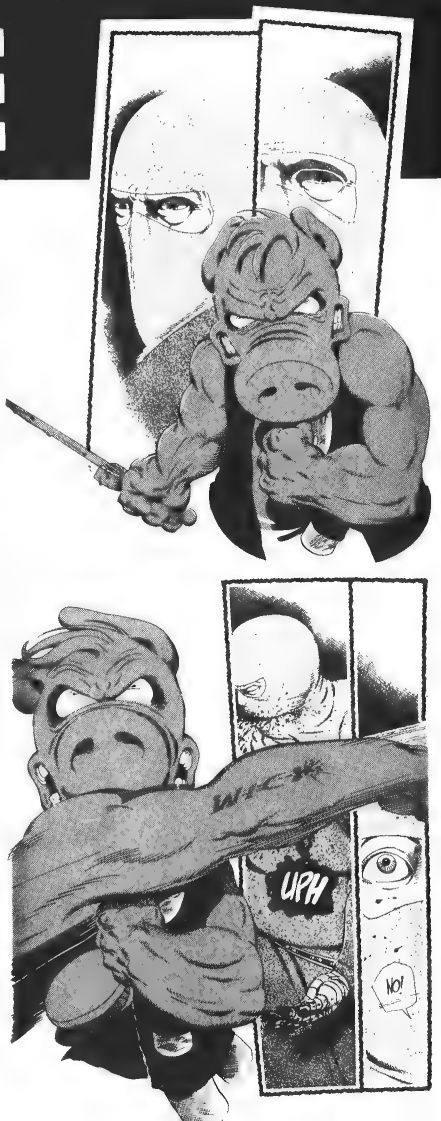
Cerebus #150 is the halfway point of what arguably may be called the greatest comic series of all time. Dave Sim's art is as brilliant as usual, the plotline is fascinating, the cover is subtly striking and even the lettering is head and shoulders above any comic on the market either yesterday or today. All of this almost goes without saying.

What I haven't said is that, to my mind, this is one of the finest issues of *Cerebus* in many months. "Melmoth" chapter II, the epilogue to this comic's most recent short story, is more a continuation of the previous *Cerebus* serials "Jaka's Story" and "Church & State" than the end to "Melmoth." It's also the most action-packed, forward-looking, just plain exciting issue to appear since Cerebus became Pope.

The most striking aspect of this issue to me is the re-opening of Cerebus's eyes after the emotional one-two punch of his being told "you will die alone, unmourned and unloved" and the assumed death of Jaka. Unlike the character we've seen previously in this series, Cerebus takes control of his life and does something that is emotionally satisfying but possibly physically suicidal. He's acting to change his life. He also rejects killing himself for a life on the run. Perhaps by making this choice, Cerebus is growing as a character.

It's almost impossible for a reviewer to give a reader a hint of the brilliance of a comic like *Cerebus*. Don't be scared by "veteran" *Cerebus* readers who seem to know more about the series than is humanly possible. Issue #150 is an excellent jumping-on point for new readers. Give a few issues a try. Believe me, once you start reading *Cerebus* you'll never stop.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ —*Jason Sacks*



LOST IN SPACE #1

Scripted by MATT THOMPSON & DAVID CAMPITI; illustrated by EDDY NEWELL & MARK JONES; edited by DAVID CAMPITI & GEORGE BRODERICK. Published by INNOVATION COMICS

I have very fond memories of the *Lost in Space* TV show. It wasn't great science fiction or even good science fiction, but in 1965, if you were five years old and enamored with all things having to do with space and monsters, (or better yet, space monsters), it was pretty darned close to the coolest thing on the tube.

Lost in Space was the highest of high concepts—the Space Family Robinson. The Robinsons were on the way to Alpha Centauri, but an unspecified hostile foreign power sabotaged the mission and the Robinsons were left in some uncharted backwater of space without a friendly star to guide them home. In addition to the dangers of deep space, the Robinsons were further imperilled by the presence of Dr. Zachary Smith, an agent of that same hostile power, who was trapped on the Jupiter 2 when it lifted off for parts unknown.

The first several episodes of the TV series were interesting "Man Vs. the Environment" tales, but in short order the stories shifted away to campy "Boy and His Robot/Monster of the Week," featuring the family's youngest member, Will Robinson, his robot (a stainless steel Lassie), and Dr. Smith, who quit being threatening and started doing comedy relief. Three seasons into their trip, *Lost in Space* was cancelled. The Robinsons never found their way to Alpha Centauri.

Innovation's continuation of *Lost in Space* begins about three years after the conclusion of the series' third season. I'm pleased to say that scripters Thompson and Campitii decided to go back to the story's original premise—a family coping with a hostile environment. In issue #1, an aggressive plant guts the Jupiter 2 and the Robinsons race against time to complete repairs and lift off before the plant breaks through their defenses for a second course. Campiti and Thompson also managed to squeeze in the backstory, some character bits, some details about space travel, and some gratuitous cheesecake shots of Judy and Penny (this *is* an Innovation comic, after all).

The art varies in quality from page to page depending in large part, I am assuming, on whether or not Newell & Jones had photo references available. Their storytelling is fine, but I'm growing tired of painted art, especially when it comes from publishers who aren't equipped to guarantee competent reproduction.

In short, the first issue of *Lost in Space* is a ho-hum, nothing grossly offensive, but nothing staggeringly original either. It's a nostalgia vehicle, one made for people who are old enough to have better things to do with their time.

GRADE: ★ ★ —*Jeffrey Lang*

BOOK REVIEW

FROM AARGH! TO ZAP!

Written by HARVEY KURTZMAN. Published by PRENTICE HALL PRESS

This is a pretty lightweight book; it took me less than an hour to read. Anyone searching for a serious, scholarly, critical history of American comics should give it a miss. Likewise, fans of Harvey Kurtzman who are interested in his work and unusual working methods will be a little disappointed; you get the feeling that he has so much he could say, but doesn't.

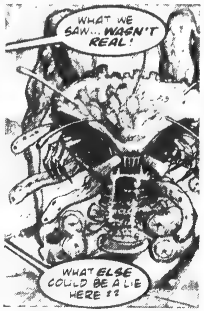
Harvey Kurtzman's view of comics history may strike readers as idiosyncratic. For instance, super-heroes are relatively marginalized. However, Kurtzman's view is one I'm in sympathy with—superheroes, because they're popular *now*, are typically assigned a position in comics history much greater than their actual importance, especially if one looks at comics history with an eye on artistic accomplishment. Kurtzman corrects this view.

A book to compare this with is Mike Benton's *The Comic Book in America*. This unreadable, wrong-headed book put the heaviest emphasis on the most trivial aspects of American comics. Kurtzman's book, "lite" as it is, has its heart in the right place.

The book is truly a visual history, but I was disappointed by the quality of a lot of the reproductions. The EC stuff seemed especially spotty, which is just inexplicable given the quantity of good EC reprints available to shoot from. And putting 16 reproductions of full pages or covers on one page (as is done in the chapter on Euro-comics) is excessive. None of the art is served well on that page. Byron Preiss has a reputation for doing very fine production work; the flubs here are a real shame.

20 dollars seems a little much for a sketchy layman's guide to comics. Unfortunately, it's probably the best currently available. It certainly offers a better package than Benton's book

An exercise in nostalgia: *Lost in Space* #1.







and a more balanced, aesthetically justified view than the (understandably) slanted Marvel history.

GRADE: ★ ★ ½ —*Robert Boyd*

ARMAGEDDON: The Alien Agenda #1

Written by JONATHAN PETERSON; pencilled by DAN JURGENS; inked by STEVE LEIALOHA; edited by DENNY O'NEIL. Published by DC COMICS

One of DC's two megaseries of the year is over. After sleeping through a series of tired annuals following the *Armageddon 2001* storyline, we find that Monarch's identity is Hawk (aka Hank Hall). Big deal. Now we have a mini-series continuing the story of Monarch. Big deal.

Originally a fairly interesting, politically conservative character from the unusual Hawk/Dove brother team, Hawk in recent years has become a shallow, thinly delineated blowhard, a cheap entry in the reactionary vigilante parade. As Monarch, his character thins further until all we have left is a screaming, revenge-ridden nutcase—no character at all. He is a far cry from the great megalomaniacs of comics like Thanos and Darkseid. Not much to build even a mini-series on here.

In order to make this loser halfway interesting, DC has thrown Captain Atom into the mix. Reports of the Captain's death in the *Justice League* books are greatly exaggerated. At the end of *Armageddon 2001*, Atom and Monarch blew each other up real good, but they actually went back in time together (snooore). So in this issue, we have pages and pages of Captain Atom and Monarch punching each other and punching a bunch of dinosaurs. Compared to Monarch, Captain Atom's character comes across as a virtual Hamlet, but compared to his appearances in his own book, the Mr. Atom here has all the complexity of Godzilla.

Oh yeah. There are some googly aliens in here too. They want to collapse the solar system together to make a wormhole to continue their own quest for a home (whatever their problem is). Lucky for us Cap and Monarch happened to be thrown back to the precise moment in prehistory when these little green men were planning such a nasty thing. Science fiction at its best. (I'm being facetious, Sidney Mellon.)

Well, Caparoonie takes the aliens' detonator and goes up in the sky and blows it up real good. And then he finds himself surrounded by Roman soldiers who want to take him to Nero. Surprise! Continued next issue. Big deal.

Rick Veitch had an all-time great time travel story a couple of years ago in *Swamp Thing*. Superman had a time travel story much more recently using a technique similar to Captain Atom and Monarch's (getting blowed up real good and bouncing to another time). That story was mildly entertaining. Why do we need yet another story like this? And one that wasn't done particularly well?

Can the art save the book? Not really. Dan Jurgens does a sevicable job, but he always needs a good inker, and Steve Leialoha, whose pen and brush are not particularly detailed, reveals the stark lack of substance in the pencils.

Avoid this one folks. Blow it up real good.

GRADE: ★ —*TK Deen*

THE HUMAN TARGET SPECIAL #1

Written by DANIEL BILSON and PAUL DEMEO; adapted by MARK VERHEIDEN; illustrated by RICK BURCHETT and DICK GIORDANO. Published by DC COMICS

Since this character hasn't seen the light of day in several years, a brief recap seems to be in order for those who aren't familiar with him.

The series stars Christopher Chance, a man who makes his living impersonating people who've been marked for murder; he takes their places long enough to smoke the would-be killers out of hiding, then apprehends them and turns them in to the police. He's plied this trade off-and-on since the 1970's as an irregular back-up series in *Action Comics* and other DC titles.

Why resurrect him now, and in a book all his own, after so long an absence? Because in early 1992, ABC-TV plans on launching the Target in his own tv series as a mid-season replacement show...with Rick Springfield, former soap actor and rock idol, as Chance. This special is an adaptation of the first episode.

How well it adapts it depends entirely on how familiar you are with the Human Target and his operations. Those who've never seen him before will doubtless find this a strong adaptation, capturing the flavor of the forthcoming tv show very well. Mark Verheiden, a gifted scripter whose praises have been sung many times before, delivers a solid job here... drawing us into the world of the TV show quickly and easily. Likewise, the art by Burchett and Giordano...also consummate professionals...is used to good effect here; their earthy, common-man styles mesh well and are quite suited to the non-super-heroic action that is the Human Target's forte.

On the other hand, those who've seen some of the Target's earlier DC appearances may find themselves somewhat disappointed in this outing. Bilson and DeMeo have given Chance a larger supporting cast than he's had in the comics, possible because of some nebulous network person who claimed it was "unrealistic" that Chance could handle an operation of this magnitude without more help; while the new characters seem likeable enough, and are as committed to Chance's ideals as he is, their presence serves to make the series less of the "man with a mission" type of premise it was when Chance was a one-man operation, and more of a generic "group of friends looking for action and danger" kind of thing, which we've seen all too many of in TV in recent years...sort of *The A-Team* with master of disguise-gimmicks thrown in.

Another fly in the ointment, for me at least, was that Bilson and DeMeo shied away from having Chance narrate the entire story himself...a trademark of the earlier comics stories which I felt gave them an added intimacy. I can think of no logical reason why this was done, and only hope that it won't be a part of each TV episode.

Despite these minor grumbles, however, the special does work fairly well to capture the flavor of the Target's comics appearances...and these days, when any adaptation of comics character to other media comes with a plethora of changes to the character and his or her unique style, that's welcome news indeed. I can safely recommend this special to anyone who has any interest in either the Target's comics appearances or his TV series, and I hope Chris Chance will have a lengthier stay on TV than did his predecessor from the Bilson-DeMeo studios, *The Flash*.

And it also wouldn't hurt my feelings if that tv success translated into a new, open-ended berth for the Target from DC, as well; it would help fill the apalling lack of non-costumed detectives in comics these days.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ —*David Poettle*

BILLI 99 #1

Concept and script by SARAH BYAM; art and lettering by TIM SALE; edited by DIANA SCHUTZ. Published by DARK HORSE COMICS

Well, here's something completely different—a dark, gritty urban vigilante tale set in a decaying inner city of the dystopian near future. The title character is a beautiful young heiress who was trained in the vigilante biz by her millionaire tycoon super-hero father, just before she was framed for his murder and forced to hide in the streets.

Now, let's face it—it's easy to be snide about things like this. All you really need to do is print a synopsis.

But even if creators Byam and Sale are mining territory that should have been declared exhausted years ago... even if the storyline fails to startle... even if just about every plot twist in the first issue summons up memories of other stories told by previous hands both hackneyed and impassioned... they pull off a little miracle. The book is far from great, but they make the story *work*. They use a vividly cinematic style that evokes Will Eisner, Frank Miller, and the best of the Japanese Manga. And though the writing is sparse and often self-consciously arty, their urban jungle *feels* like a real place, with the kind of internal logic necessary to temporarily keep readers from remembering they're reading a story.

One example: their lady vigilante ain't a fashionably coiffed *Playboy* centerfold in super-heroic lingerie. She looks and acts meaner than a junkyard dog. And though she's a good fighter, she's not invincible enough to wipe out platoons—even a single persistent street thug is enough to give her a hard time. And you don't even realize she is a vigilante until halfway through the story, after her personality and the world she inhabits have already been largely established. By that point it almost seems natural.

So it's not great. So it's not the kind of stuff I'd ordinarily like. It's still a minor triumph of form over substance. Sue me.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½ —*Adam-Troy Castro*

A comic that works: Sarah Byam and Tim Sale's *Billi 99*.



ARCHIE AMERICANA SERIES: Best of the Forties

Written & illustrated by VARIOUS; edited by SCOTT D. FULOP. Published by ARCHIE COMICS PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Although I read Archie comics as a

child, they were usually my sister's copies (like all young males, I was a super-hero lover), and today I can hardly remember what happened in them. I guess that's because the plots never varied. There was the continual triangle of Archie, Betty and Veronica. There was Jughead, his cigarette nose constantly buried in a burger. There were the usual pratfalls, the common blandness. And yet, as I recall, Archie was good for a laugh from time to time. That's surely one reason he's stayed around so long.

Volume One of the *Archie Americana Series* celebrates *The Best of the Forties*. The first story, titled simply "Archie," presents the basic elements which have remained constant through the years. Although the character himself looks three or four years younger than the one we usually picture, and although Veronica hasn't yet arrived on the scene, Archie's dumb-as-a-dog determination to impress the girls and succeed in his little town, the backfiring of his attempts, and his friendship with the woman-hating Jughead are already in place. Within a year, as this collecion shows, he had acquired his famous jalopy and was chasing the "sub deb" (sub debutante), Veronica. That's the way Archie was in the '40s, and that's the way he stayed. The only real changes have been in the fads and fashions shown.

Occasionally, I laughed out loud as I read through the *Forties*—not at the quaintness of certain expressions and the activities of the day (like jitterbugging), but at the genuine humor that flashes from these pages every now and then. My favorite of the collection is "Prom Pranks" (1942), in which Archie persuades a grousing Jughead to help him pull off his eternal "boy with two dates" trick. "What?" says Jug. "You want me to buy a *corset* for her?. . ." "No, no!" screams Archie. "Flowers to wear on her dress!" Then we see the very practical pal's solution to the problem: he pulls flowers from a grave in the moonlight. That single, tiny panel is at once absurd, macabre, and funny as all get-out. Naturally, the "corsage" turns out to be poison ivy, and naturally, about a hundred dance partners crush the stuff to Veronica's pretty bosom. Imagine the rest for yourself.

Others may pontificate on the continuing appeal of these simplistic characters and their idyllic world. As far as I'm concerned, Archie and his pals and gals have only got one thing going for them—their ability to make kids and critics, moms and dads laugh. Or, failing that, to make us chuckle. Or, failing that, to make us smile. That gift was worth a lot in the war-torn '40s. It's worth even more today.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½ —Gary D. Robinson

Hi-tone humor from *Archie Americana Series: Best of the Forties.*



VINTAGE MAGNUS #1

Written and illustrated by RUSS MANNING. Published by VALIANT

Way back in the dark ages, when I was (much) younger, my circle of friends and I knew what *real* comics were. Real comics were Marvel comics and, to a lesser degree, DCs too. Oh sure, there were a few other comics companies, but they were hardly worth acknowledging, let alone considering. No, we all thought Marvel had the most important, the most exciting comics. Some of us held onto a few DC favorites, but we knew we were fighting a losing battle with mighty Marvel.

And then there was my younger brother.

His favorite comic, indeed the only comic that he ever bought, was something called *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, from heaven help us, Gold Key. Yes, wimpy old Gold Key! Kiddy Gold Key! Okay, so it was set in the future—way far in the future (4000 A.D.)—and that was okay. But Magnus himself? He was absurd! He was able to use his "steel smashing strength" to destroy robots with hs bare hands! This was ridiculous. Where was the *origin* story for this stupid ability? (It wasn't even a real "power!") And Magnus was dull, dull, dull. Not even a flashy costume.

My brother kept saying such things as "I like the art" and "it's an interesting idea," but we didn't pay much attention.

Skip to the present. Those old *Magnus* issues are hard to find. (I guess Marvel and DC fans were better at squirreling away their copies for posterity.) They're even rising in price thanks to the all-new revival of Magnus published by Valiant. Now Valiant is publishing a series reprinting some of the original stories, starting with, yes, what could be called Magnus' "origin." How does this stuff look after all this time?

It looks pretty darn good. Manning's artwork is as crisp and clear as ever, only now I can look at it through more appreciative and less biased eyes. If not the most dynamic of artists, Manning presents the action clearly and precisely, drawing the reader along easily.

I must admit that I even miss those trademark painted covers that Gold Key used to have, though the Bob Layton cover commissioned by Valiant is certainly up-to-date in its violence and intensity. (Yet it seems to lack the virtue that Manning installed in his characters, somehow.)

The story does a little less well. Right from the start, the twin themes of the series are outlined: 1) Humans are becoming weak because the robots do all the work and 2) There are evil, disobedient robots which threaten humankind. Though related, these are obviously two very different things, yet the series never quite reconciled them. The second was dealt with much more than the first (thus missing an excellent potential) and it is no different here, as Magnus battles the evil plans of robot H8 ("hate").

So, what do we have? Good art, good fun, and storylines that hold the reader's interest but often come off as a bit lightweight. For their time, there were, in truth, near the top of the heap. And they still look pretty good today, too. But I *still think* Magnus' "steel smashing strength" is pretty absurd.

As an added bonus, there is a one-page text piece by the late Mr. Manning explaining how he became involved in the series.

And I'm giving this one an extra half-star for the sake of nostalgia. . . and my brother.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½ —T. M. Maple



A lunatic escapes from an asylum and acts out all of Humphrey Bogart's most famous roles in *The Bogie Man.*

THE BOGIE MAN TRADE PAPERBACK

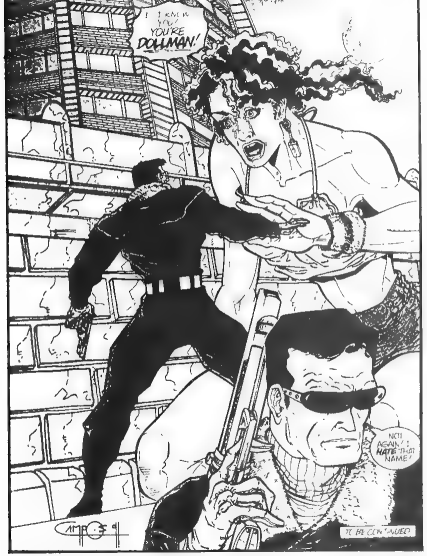
Written by JOHN WAGNER & ALAN GRANT; Art by ROBIN SMITH. Published by JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING LTD.

The Bogie Man is a meditation on, appreciation of, and response to the hard-boiled detective mystique. Comic fans know all about hard-boiled detectives, whether they know it or not. The hard-boiled detective is the tarnished knight, the tough-as-nails mug who knows all the angles, has a bitter secret in his past, and a heart of gold that he keeps hidden from the world, usually by pickling it in cheap whiskey or cloaking it in a cynical sneer. The hard-boiled detective is one of the walking wounded, the one individual who cannot be corrupted because he has already lost the only thing that holds any value for him. There—we've got the academic portion of our program out of the way. Now, for extra points, name the two popular super-hero characters who most closely fit this description and why you think so.

The Bogie Man isn't meant to be taken so seriously (in fact, it's a hoot), but it's important to understand the background to appreciate the joke. It's the story of an escaped lunatic who is running around Glasgow, Scotland, acting out disjointed bits of Bogart dialogue and generally confounding the citizenry, the police, and some small-time hoods who are trying to dispose of a truckload of frozen turkeys two days after New Year's.

The Bogie Man is desperately trying to latch onto a plot, *any* plot, and is willing to shoot up the whole town until he finds one. Unfortunately for the folks who get involved with him, the B-Man has a habit of switching storylines in midstream without warning. For example, the B-Man is in a bar and someone starts playing the piano, so naturally the B-Man starts quoting *Casablanca* dialogue: "I thought I told you never to play that song." Moments later, a woman admires a frozen turkey, "a big bird," and to the B-Man it becomes THE Big Bird, the Maltese Falcon.

Writers Wagner and Grant (of Judge Dredd and Batman fame) do *not* attempt to make the Bogie Man a cute and cuddly lunatic or use the nauseating rationalization that his actions are "the only sane reacton to an insane society." He is a dangerously deluded schizophrenic who retools reality (often violently) to suit whatever plotline he has running (sort of like comic book writers). You *want* to like the Bogie Man, but every time he does something vaguely heroic, he turns around and clobbers an innocent for a minor infraction of his moral code (boy slurps milkshake and gets shake dumped on head). At the conclusion of this tale, the Bogie Man is sad, pathetic, and confused, though I understand Wagner and Grant have gone on to do other stories, so they must have done something to



reinvigorate the character.

The Bogie Man works on several levels—it's both funny and thought-provoking and deserves more attention than it has received so far. John Brown Publishing deserves praise for the fine design of this compilation package.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★ —**Jeffrey Lang**

DOLLMAN #1

Written by BILL SPANGLER; illustrated by MARCELO CAMPOS; edited by DAN DANKO. Published by MALIBU

Dirty Harry Meets *The Incredible Shrinking Man*—that seems to be the idea behind *Dollman*, a film creation transplanted to comics. So far, however, this particular fusion of those two concepts lacks the power of the one and the wonder of the other. Despite the fact that its hero carries the a "596.8 Ruger, the most powerful gun in the known universe," *Dollman* #1 is really rather weak, silly, and adolescent.

On his home planet Arturos, Brick Bardo ("Brick?" Are we beginning to discover his weakness yet?) is One Tough Cop, the Meanest Son of a Gun you'd never want to meet. On Earth, however, he's just 13 inches tall—but "with an attitude," as the movie promo reads. He's gunning for his arch enemy, Sprug ("Sprug" yet! I love these names!), a villain so mean his brain lives on even though Bardo has shot his body to bits over the years.

Say now, *that's* funny! It reminds me of the disintegrating Black Knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Indeed, *Dollman* contains all the elements of a great parody. Brick's wraparound sunglasses (apparently superglued on), his Sledge Hammer (remember him?) devotion to his gun, the tough talk, roaring engines, and leggy, bosomy damsels in distress all read like a send-up of modern Clint/Arnold shoot-em-ups. Brick's size, or lack thereof, is full of comedic possibility, but those possibilities have yet to be mined. I doubt that they will be. Not that the book has to be gut-bustingly funny: I'm just suggesting a light touch instead of this heavy-handed approach.

Or should I say one-handed? *Dollman* is strictly male adolescent power and sexual fantasy. The cover says it all: a leather-jacketed, fully clothed little man wields a gun as he sits atop the naked breasts of a beautiful babe. Since this is only issue #1, the grunting and heaving hasn't started yet, but give it time.

The writing is fast and slick, the artwork is a little rough and exaggerated, but fitting for the subject matter. Frankly, however, I don't think the subject matter, with its cynical "hero," graphic violence (some of it against women), and lack of (intentional) humor, is fitting for anybody.

GRADE: ★ ★ —**Gary D. Robinson**

CREEPY: The Classic Years Trade Paperback

Written by ARCHIE GOODWIN and VARIOUS; art by VARIOUS; edited by RICHARD HOWELL. Published by HARRIS COMICS

Ooo, kids, things are really scary these days on the comics rack! We have old stuff, new stuff, even blue stuff. This trade paperback is a look back at some old stuff; that is, stories from the first issues of the old Warren *Creepy* magazine of the mid-'60s.

After the collapse of the horror market in the 1950s, regular four-color comics spooky stuff existed only as tame "supernatural" tales of magicians and radioactive monsters (of the Foom Fing Goomba Fangma Groot Toorga type). Yet the more hard-edged horror tale couldn't die, and it was resurrected in the black & white *Creepy* (and later *Eerie*). Not having been a reader of these magazines, and having read the classic EC's only in their current reprintings, I think I can speak objectively and without the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia.

Overall, I find these stories okay, and that's about it. Actually, they don't even indulge in the level of gore of the EC's, yet they're far more graphic than Marvel's "I Married a Not-So Nice Goomba from Outer Space." To modern readers of the new splatter comics, though, this stuff is nothing.

But gore alone does not a horror comic make. What about the craftmanship? Personally, I have found very few 6 to 8 page stories that have ever struck me as particularly good tales, and, not surprisingly, the level of storytelling in this volume is uneven. There are dull EC rip-offs, contrived EC one-upmanship, boring dreck, and some fine little tales. The majority of the stories are journeyman work by Archie Goodwin, and you can tell he's feeling his oats—some misses, some hits.

For me, the star of the book is the art. This collection represents an important moment in comics history—a passing of the torch, if you will. We have fine art from old masters, many from the old EC stables, (Frank Frazetta, Gray Morrow, Alex Toth, Johnny Craig, Reed Crandall, and some of the best Steve Ditko work I've ever seen). But we also have work by the newcomers who would become the superstars of the future—including Neal Adams, Jeff Jones, and Al Williamson. Some of it is obviously young work, and some of it is already very accomplished. It's a fascinating mix.

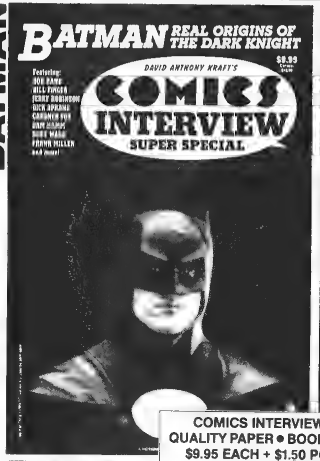
If you're looking for a primo collection of comics horror, you can find better ones elsewhere. If you're interested in looking at comics history in the making and some occasionally effective horror shorts, this is a great anthology to have.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ —**TK Dean**

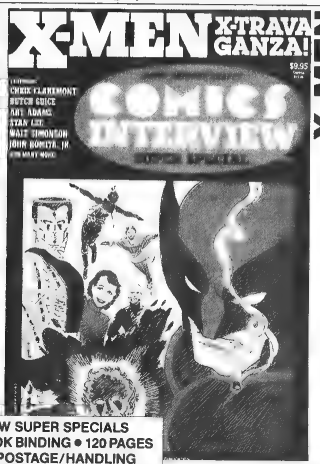
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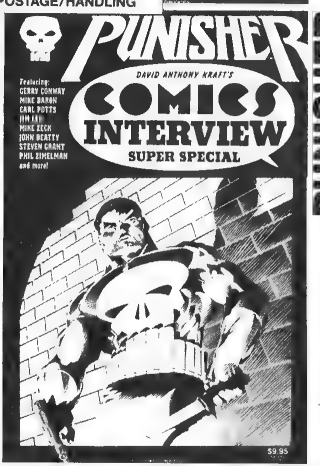


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"Comics Interview Super Specials, Punisher, Batman, X-Men and — the piece de resistance — Masters of Marvel. I'd rate all of these as don't-miss items, particularly the last named. Grade: A."
— *Don Thompson, COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE*

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CALIBER

A TAD TOO UNFOCUSED

by T.M. Maple

THE ADVENTURES OF TAD MARTIN #1
Written by and illustrated by AL FRANK

A CLOWN WITH A GUN
Written and illustrated by MIC DUGGAN.

BOUNTY #1
Written by RANDALL THAYER, PAUL DALY, and BRENT TRUAX; illustrated by PAUL DALY, BRANDON PETERSON, and AUBREY BRADFORD.

PLANET 29 #1
Written and illustrated by KEVIN ATKINSON.

SILENCERS #2
Written by MARK ASKWITH; illustrated by R.G. TAYLOR. All published by CALIBER PRESS.

On the cover of the premiere issue of his comic book, Tad Martin is called an "Average American Teenager." A few pages into the issue, my feeling about that designation was: if it's true, America is in rather worse shape than I had thought. But after finishing the entire issue the feeling was tempered somewhat. I think I might even have seen a glimmer of hope.

Tad (or is it the author or someone else?—you're never too sure) is at his repugnant best in "Revenge Through Chemistry," as he uses drugs on his girlfriend and her family in retribution for her having dumped him. He tops the evening off by (presumably) killing her cat by dragging it around with his car.

But in the very next story, "Teenagers & Buicks," Tad (or, at least, the same character as in the previous story) shows a surprising measure of sensitivity in a tale of typical teenage car glorification. Having lost his girl to a guy with a better car, he gets an old wreck and builds it up enough so that he can challenge the other fellow. But even as he engages in the contest, he realizes that a girl who would give herself as a prize is not worthy. The contest ends in tragedy and we are left to reflect on the meaning of it all. There is no follow-up or introspection and so there might be a moral emptiness here, but the possibility exists that "Tad" saw some truths in these events.

In "Speed!" we get a look at someone who definitely is Tad Martin. Unsurprisingly, the situation is far from ideal, as the drug-addicted Tad visits his less-than reputable sister to pick up a memento from dear old Dad, who was an FBI agent who became addicted to government-supplied speed. Even in these sordid, not to mention weird, circumstances we see a flash of insight as Tad is compared (if only fleetingly) to his father.

Tad Martin (and Al Frank) have definite possibilities, but I see too little in this unfocused mish mash to say much more than that.

GRADE: ★ ★

In the Author's Note in *A Clown With A Gun*, Mic Duggan (re)discovers the Golden Rule (i.e., do unto others as you would have them do unto you). Well, sort of. This may sound a bit trite, but then, even the well-worn and familiar can have profound impact if they are truly understood and adhered to.

Echoes of this understanding are seen in the story itself, which involves a clown who has been fired from his circus. Once a "star," he wanders the streets aimlessly, trying to find new direction and meaning for his life. Bizarrely, but believably, he comes to the conclusion that he must "Kill sumboddy." Up to this point, the story is very effective, as the clown muses about life and attempts to deal with his anguish. Losing a job may seem like a "small" thing, but in reality it can be devastating and in this context it can even bee seen as a fall from grace.

Matters deteriorate from a storytelling standpoint when the Clown accidentally encounters a young child who becomes his intended victim. What follows may have been intended to be bizarre or surreal or "deep," but to me it comes off as a bit aimless and rather cutesy; it definitely lacks the sharp edge and insight of the first part of the story.

Though this suffers near the end, and the conclusion is just too pat, it is generally a compelling read and it evokes some powerful emotions.

However, I don't think that this clown ever *really* had a gun. (But maybe that's the point.)

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

The Western is one of the great genres of American popular literature, but it has had little success in comics in recent years. *Bounty* is a welcome three-issue excursion into this territory by Caliber. The meaning of the series' title is not clear to me from the first issue. What *is* clear is that this series is a solid effort by those concerned.

The issue contains two stories, both of which are to be continued into the next issue. The first of these tales, by Thayer and Daly, bears the title of the series itself and concerns an episode in the life of one Willian McDermett. This rather enigmatic, though obviously competent, figure encounters a lone wagon on the westward trail. Though he is transporting a dead body for burial, McDermett stops to help the travellers, whose wagon has broken down. But soon, greater danger appears imminent, as the threat of an attack by bandits seems likely to be fulfilled.

McDermett is a nicely drawn figure—not unreservedly virtuous, by any means, but not completely self-serving either. Or so it seems. His interactions with the travellers ring true and an atmosphere of understated tension is effectively conveyed. Beneath the surface pleasantries (and some not so subtle unpleasantries) each of the characters is trying to understand what is really going on and what the outcome might be.

The second story, "Quest For Vengeance," features an Indian named Navarro, who is a scout for the U.S. cavalry. However, when he returns to his village from a mission, he finds it has been decimated and its inhabitants massacred. The cavalry officers accompanying him believe that it is the work of some renegade cavalrymen and promise to bring them to justice, but the grief-stricken Navarro cannot wait and he heads off on his own in search of the murderers.

This tale reads almost purely as a setup for future action. We get little feeling for the chacteristics of the main participants. It is also seemingly a bit too pat, in that the U.S. cavalry can serve both as the good guys (the regular cavalrymen) helping (well, *sort* of helping, anyway) Navarro and as the bad guys (the "renegades"), while Navarro seeks his revenge. Still, while certainly not as strong as the opening story in this issue, this installment shows some promise and is competently presented.

These two tales amply demonstrate that there is a lot of life left in the Western yet.

GRADE: ★ ★ ½

In *Planet 29 #1* we are plunged into one of Kevin Atkinson's worlds—and a weird one it is, at that.

Sometime in the indefinite future, the elite had broken off from the rest of society to inhabit a floating continent. But all is not well up in the air. First, "a few beatniks, homosexuals, witches, country & western singers," and other "undesirables" managed to tag along for the ride. Second, "due to the different gravity," mutants began to appear amongst the population. Now, the ultimate horror is about to befall the skydwellers: the floating continent is beginning to sink back to earth. There, the elite will find itself amongst the remnants of the workers they abandoned. But things have deteriorated greatly on the surface, which is now inhabited by "blue collar cannibals."

The story focuses on two inhabitants of the cloud city. Biff Cron is an insect-eyed mutant who is the star of his own TV show. However, Biff is not satisfied with the second class social status that a mutant is limited to and he yearns to move up in the world (so to speak). However, these desires appear in jeopardy when he discovers that he is afflicted with accelerated mutant chromosomes which are making his appearance even more insect-like.

Leonard H. Squakman is a presidential advisor trying to deal with the impending crisis. Though narrow-minded and bigoted, his less than firm grasp on reality leads to the so-called solution to the crisis which forms the cliffhanger ending to the issue. By the end of the four-issue series, he will no doubt have done considerable damage to all around him.

Atkinson throws a lot of off-kilter concepts at the reader here, and he shows a good sense of the bizarre. I'm not really sure where he's going with this—bizarre humor or weird adventure or what. But it looks like it will be quite an interesting journey.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

In an interview in *Silencers #2* writer Mark Askwith gives the British TV series *Sandbaggers* as a major influence for his excursion into the world of espionage. This is certainly a good sign to me, as *Sandbaggers* is one of my favorite TV series, one that made me really care about the characters and events it portrayed. Askwith's determination to de-emphasize the pyrotechnics and concentrate on the characters and their interaction is admirable indeed. In this he is helped in no small measure by artist R.G. Taylor, who has the ability to sensitively portray distinctive characters and whose lack of flashy excess is well suited to the down-to-earth feeling that Askwith wants to convey.

I must admit, though, that the decision to focus on *Canadian* spies struck me as rather outlandish at first. All of my (admittedly sparse) knowledge of spying tells me that Canada has neither the resources nor the competence to play in anything remotely resembling the big leagues of spydom. Come on, fellows, this is Canada—a fourth-rate (or is it fifth-rate by now?) country on the fringes of power, at best. Still, maybe I can be convinced of the plausibility of this by the time the series ends. And in the meantime, Askwith and Taylor provide plenty to keep the reader occupied.

The plot is advanced slowly, methodically, and even obscurely, but the reader's interest is continually gripped by the attention to detail.

It's hard to rate this before all the pieces have fallen together. It might manage to rise considerably above where it is now, but at the moment I'd have to give it . . .

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

A touching moment in Al Frank's *Adventures of Tad Martin*.



Silencers #2.



MARVEL

A BETTER *FLYTRAP*

by Alex Chun

THE LEGION OF THE NIGHT #1

Written by STEVE GERBER; pencilled by WHILCE PORTACIO; inked by SCOTT WILLIAMS; edited by RALPH MACCHIO.

ALIEN LEGION: TENANTS OF HELL #2

Written by CHUCK DIXON; pencilled by LARRY STROMAN; inked by DAN PANOSIAN; edited by MARC McLAURIN.

PUNISHER: P.O.V. #4

Written by JIM STARLIN; illustrated by BERNIE WRIGHTSON; edited by NEL YOMTOV.

THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES OF CHOLLY AND FLYTRAP

Written and illustrated by ARTHUR SUYDAM; edited by DANNY FINGEROTH.

FANTASTIC FOUR #358

Written by TOM DEFALCO; pencilled by PAUL RYAN; inked by DANNY BULANDADI; edited by RALPH MACCHIO.

It recently dawned on me that after my weekly sojourn to the local comic book store, I was returning with fewer and fewer books. The odd thing, however, was that I was still spending about the same amount of money. And the reason, I quickly deduced, was not caused by the cost of "regular" books (though I've heard Marvel will soon by upping the price on those books), but by the greater proportion of prestige format books among the books I was purchasing.

While we can blame DC's *Dark Knight* for beginning this phenomenon, Marvel's the one that has really taken off with the idea of the square bound book. The cost of these books generally ranges from $4.95-$5.95 (or up to $25 if you include graphic novels), and more and more I'm questioning whether these books are worth the price of five regular books, and more and more the answer is "no."

I'm actually an advocate of the format; I just feel that whatever goes between the covers of such a book should be worthy of the treatment, whether it be for its story and/or art. I remember when the prestige format was reserved for special projects like the aforementioned *Dark Knight* or Marvel's *Meltdown* and *Stray Toasters;* now-a-days, however, "special" often means an outlet for an inventory story or a way to capitalize on the current hot character. My biggest worry is that one day soon you won't be able to distinguish between a prestige format book and a regular comic—except by the price.

Legion of the Night is supposed to be Marvel's foray into horror books, but to tell the truth, it's nothing that you wouldn't expect to see in any old issue of *Dr. Strange*.

Simply put, it revolves around a cult who wishes to summon the mystical dragon Fin Fang Foom (for those of you with good memories, that was the alias used by the Midgard serpent in an issue of *Thor* a few years ago). Next, Charles Blackwater, a lawyer who is quite high on himself, takes the cult on as a client, defending it against allegations ranging from kiddie porn to kidnapping. He wins the case. As time progresses, however, he discovers that he was 180 degrees wrong about the cult and its leader, Reeve Calder, and this revelation leads to his death. But death when the arcane is involved is a relative thing, and in this case Blackwater's death serves as an excuse for the rebirth of Omen, whose purpose is to lead the Legion of the Night against Fin Fang Foom.

Just who will make up the Legion, I know not, but my money is on a comely coed who appears at the beginning of the books and who by the middle, is seen levitating in front of an orb. Other good bets would be a shop keeper and his morbid grade-school daughter, and the editor of the mysterious phenomenon rag, *Cruel Fate*.

Nice art, interesting story and characters, but this is not the stuff of horror books as this book portends to be. The art by Portacio is a little too clean, and the story makes a little too much sense. It lacks the unexpected and it lacks that uncomfortable feeling that a horror book should instill in a person. It lacks the boogie man that slept in your closet at night when you were a small child.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

Throughout its various incarnations, *Alien Legion* has consistently provided quality artwork and storytelling. But if the book continues in its present form and frequency, that may soon not be enough to keep even the most dedicated readers of the title.

Alien Legion: Tenants of Hell #2 is the conclusion to a two-issue mini-series that places Nomad Squadron on the planet Halligon to quell a rebellion. But as usual, Nomad discovers that all is not as it seems. The planet is to be literally liquidated by corporate bigwigs because of its non-profitability, and the population is considered an expendable asset. It is therefore up to Nomad to get as many people off the planet as possible, the fat cats, of course, being the number one priority.

Nothing new for the Nomad, which is why I can't figure out why Epic had decided to package *Alien Legion* in the prestige format, especially since at its original lower price it was a notoriously poor seller. And to add insult to injury, each two-issue series ships about six months apart. That's a pretty hefty wait for a book that relies a great deal on continuity.

After reading this issue, I have a feeling that the Legion has just about



run its course. One of the intriguing aspects of the Legion had been the interchangeability of characters, but as of late, the book has locked into a few selective characters who have become stagnant. Jugger and Sarigar never changed, and Torie Montroc, once the Legion's idealist, has settled as the Legion's cynic. What's worse is that all of Nomad has gotten old. In every issue it's Nomad against the world—just a bunch of grunt soldiers being slowly ground down in a system where they no longer fit. And there's no longer that underlying social issue that used to permeate the stories. I guess a case could be made that *Tenants of Hell* is about how big corporations don't care much for the little man, but if that's the best they can do, it's time for me to resign from the Legion.

GRADE: ★ ★

Take an issue of the *Cult*. Take out Batman. Insert the Punisher. Now you've got *Punisher P.O.V.* That's the gist of this final issue of a four-issue prestige format series where the Punisher follows the spawn of Wainscroft's mutated son down into the sewers. As in the *Cult*, there is a climactic battle between the main character and an adversary in the muck of the Big Apple. And once again justice is served in an ironic sort of way. Not a big surprise then, that this book was created by the same team that brought us the *Cult:* Jim Starlin and Bernie Wrightson.

The book does differ from the *Cult* in one way: this time the protagonist has a little competition, a self-proclaimed monster hunter by the name of Chester Goudal. While Goudal is mentally unbalanced to say the least, his m.o. isn't all that different that the Punisher's, which is why I had such a hard time swallowing the Punisher's disdain for him. In fact, with the Punisher enraptured by the cooing of a baby, it's Goudal who finally accomplishes what the Punisher couldn't: destroying Wainscroft's monstrous creation—even if it had a cute face.

P.O.V. is selling nothing more than the character's and the creators' names. This book is certainly not Wrightson's best work (if you want his best, take a look at the recently released Wrightson retrospective, *A Look Back*), and Starlin vainly tries to make the Punisher something he's not. After finishing this final issue, I felt like I had gone neither here nor there. Nothing new is revealed about anything, and unfortunately, it took me four issues to find that out.

GRADE: ★ ★

For those of you unfamiliar with the characters Cholly and Flytrap, as I was, Flytrap is a man—well sort of since we never actually see his face which is hidden by aviator goggles and hat—marooned on some god-forsaken planet a la Robinson Crusoe. And on this unnamed planet, he rides of the shoulders of his indigenous companion, Cholly, a rather large, mute creature who can best be summed up as a cross between a Beluga whale and a sumo wrestler. And lacking anything better to do, Cholly and Flytrap are relegated to war games against the planet's rather unusual inhabitants, games Flytrap fondly calls, "A little love, a little hate." Controlled anarchy I'd call it.

The Original Adventures of Cholly and Flytrap is what Epic calls it. Through this graphic novel compilation from the pages of the now defunct *Epic Magazine*, we get to follow Cholly and Flytrap through a series of vignettes; while the tales themselves aren't overly memorable, the characters, the artwork and the world that writer/artist Arthur Suydam creates are. He populates his world with walking slugs, giant insects and flying breasts. In a battle against a wily opponent, amid many barbs and much profanity, Flytrap rises momentarily to give his adversary the finger, and promptly gets his hand blown off. It's really quite hilarious in a warped sort of way, and pretty much represents the tone of the entire book.

Suydam's line-work and character poses can't help but draw comparisons to Frazetta. The comparisons are even more evident in a portfolio that concludes with a haunting image of a slumped Flytrap with trio of arrows embedded in his chest.

Now this is one that deserves nothing less than the graphic novel format, and after reading *Cholly and Flytrap,* I can't quite figure out why *Epic Magazine* never made it, especially when you remember that other contributors included Jon J. Muth, John Byrne and John Bolton. And all of them for under three bucks.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Let me know if you've heard this before, because I have. Boy falls in love with girl. Boy finds out about girl's tainted past. Boy abandons girl. Girl sacrifices her life for sake of boy. After girl dies, boy discovers how much girl meant to him. And only an idiot couldn't figure out what would happen when Johnny Storm discovers the woman he married, and thought was Alicia Masters, is really a Skrull sent to infiltrate the F.F. Of course that plan fell through when the reluctant sleeper, Lyja, managed to fall in love with the Torch.

But as much as I hated the predictability of the plot, what really irked me was the missed plot opportunities that having a skrull as the Torch's wife might have presented. Imagine if you will, if you had to introduce your wife to your friends and she was green, had pointy ears and funny bumps on her chin.

The mundane plot, however, only takes up half of this "triple sized 30th anniversary spectacular." The other half of the book is filled with banal biographical pin-ups, a trite five-page story that even Arthur Adams couldn't save, and a two-page stroll down memory lane by *Marvel Age* regular Peter Sanderson.

The book's saving grace (along with Paul Ryan's artwork), however, is a reprint of Stan Lee's original F.F. proposal. What makes the proposal interesting is not the mere fact that it's the first document on Marvel's cornerstone team, but rather how it differs from what we eventually saw in comic book form. In this first draft, the invisible girl was permanently invisible and needed a mask to be seen, and the Thing was nowhere near the gentle giant we all know and love. He



Left: from *Cholly & Flytrap.* Above: *Fantastic Four* #358.

was to be heavy, hiding in the shadows and never to be trusted.

Ah, nothing like revisiting originality. Now if only that originality had spilled over to the rest of the book. And guess what, the Torch and the rest of the Fantastic Four somehow manage to leave Lyja's body behind. Gee, do you think she's really, *really* dead?

The synopsis gets five stars, but the rest of the book:

GRADE: ★ ½

DC

TOO MUCH MACHO

by Elizabeth Holden

ANIMAL MAN #40

Written by TOM VEITCH; illustrated by STEVEN DILLON; edited by TOM PEYER.

CLASH #1

Written by TOM VEITCH; illustrated by ADAM KUBERT.

THE GRIFFIN #1

Co-created by DAN VADO and NORMAN FELCHLE; written by DAN VADO; pencilled by NORMAN FELCHLE; inked by MARK McKENNA.

THE HACKER FILES #1

Written by LEWIS SHINER; illustrated by TOM SUTTON and MARK BUCKINGHAM.

PSYCHO #1

Written by JAMES D. HUDNALL; illustrated by DANIEL BRERETON.

The strength of *Animal Man* #40 lies in its art. Steve Dillon has managed a clear, simple style that emphasizes the characterization and clarifies the action. The layouts are more concerned with narrative presentation than artiness. This creates something which is more artistic than many of the more ambitious styles.

Not that there is anything wrong with the writing or the storyline. Looking scruffy and worn out from hours of driving, Buddy Baker discovers a place where bears are being hunted. He feels attuned to bears, musing as he drives along the highway that his name Bernhard means "bold as a bear," yet he is "haunted by the suffering of my brothers..." He rejects the appeal for help and offers of support he receives from the Phantom Stranger and Dr. Fate, implicitly rejecting humanity. "No one understands my life," he snarls. "You people with your nice little powers."



Above: *Animal Man* #40. Right: *Psycho* #1.

It may be the first time in his long career that the Phantom Stranger has heard his powers described as "little."

Caught up in the "terrifying mystery of myself," Buddy Baker stays in Rosewood, where the evil forces surrounding the city threaten his powers and his sanity. Investigating the suffering of the bears, he discovers the underwater town once featured in *Swamp Thing*. Buddy, in turn, is hunted by the hunters.

There is some good, effective scripting. I gritted my teeth when Buddy was called "Animule Lad" by the suitably creepy villain. It was alarming when Buddy's powers ebbed, and I cheered at the heroic resolution when the bears triumphed. I was particularly pleased with the sensitivity with which Buddy's powers were shown: "Animals are being tortured there...I can feel it. I feel it and I take courage from these tiny water skimmers..." There is here not only the sense of Buddy's oneness with nature, but the power of place and of the geographic links to powers both good and bad.

But...I was bothered by the mixed messages in the story which were never resolved.

Was it a story, as it first appeared, of the evil within mankind pitted against the noble innocence of the animal? If so, why did the villains ultimately look like animals?

If the story was simply that of men demonically corrupted, then much of the power is lost: Buddy is champion of animal-kind, and the overt message is one of conservation. Buddy's powers and his temper both seemed to vary with the needs of the plot, adding a touch of contrivance. The subtleties of this plot did not always mesh well with the action.

The brief appearance of Dr. Fate and the Phantom Stranger added a pleasant note of commentary on Buddy's role: "He is not meant to walk alone." And yet, it is clear, his powers do not predispose him to the standard superhero activities of beating on crooks and tracking down supervillains.

The superb cover by Brian Bolland also deserves mention. Dramatic, attractive, symbolic as well as representative of the comic's interior, it is a good example of what a comic book cover should be.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

The Clash #1 was another comic with effective art—detailed, fast-moving and exotic.

Unfortunately, the story was disappointing: a classic archaeological fantasy which failed to rise above cliche. A predictable and trite story can be redeemed by its characters' charms, but this one was further burdened with an obnoxious hero. A hero can be a scoundrel, a braggart and a womanizer, but a hero without humanity is no hero at all.

This is the story of Joe McLash, whose girlfriend is killed while he pursues a lucrative adventure in Afghanistan. No probelm: girlfriends are replacable. After a return to the United States, Clash goes back to the east with his father, and he discovers that his father, decades before, had murdered his partner for the sake of a treasure-trove. Investigating the treasure, he discovers a beautiful and exotic underground kingdom where, by its arcane technology, he becomes infused with limitless power. He then sets out to conquer the world, or at least part of it, Genghis Khan style.

The script is deft and witty, but the story is impossibly hackneyed. There is nothing redeemingly interesting or sympathetic about the hero or his quest—whose ambition in life is "sellin' off the knick-knacks and havin' a partayy!"

Right. Considering that this comic is marketed for an adult audience, it should have a hero with an emotional and intellectual age of more than twelve.

GRADE: ★ ★

The Griffin is a slick-looking prestige-format comic with a stunning front cover by Matt Wagner. Inside, the story is light space opera, both vacuous and entertaining. The art is simple and colorful. The space scenes are particularly memorable, although characters also are drawn distinctively. Specialist Carson was a particular favorite of mine. So was the hero's sidekick, Lt. Stomu.

It was the protagonist himself who set a sour note. He is again an unlikable hero, an egotist who kills a shipload of men to annoy his admiral as he deserts his fleet. He is not unpleasant on the scale of Clash, but he is selfish, vain and unheroic, showing little maturity or rational thought. Why would the aliens want an earthling with no brains or judgement in their fleet? Cannon fodder?

This is similar to the problem with *Clash*, but this time the airy tone and the well-defined secondary characters keep the book enjoyable. This is mediocre material presented wittily and well.

It annoyed me only slightly that of a universe full of aliens, all seem to be male. And of the inhabitants of Earth, we see only two women: one a stereotyped girlfriend, the other an even more stereotyped mother. This comic makes no pretense of depth on any level, but it is irritating to be reminded that the adventure-story norm is so unrelentingly masculine.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

The Hacker Files #1 begins Lewis Shiner's new series, set in the world of high-security computers, examining what goes wrong when the systems fail. This is not a novel theme, but Shiner approaches it with such wit and originality that it seems fresh again.

The failure of the computers here is not just intellectualized: there is considerable spookiness in the way the words on the computer screens spiral off to oblivion. There is considerable sympathy for the anti-establishment hero, who walks into the Pentagon with an anarchist symbol on his T-shirt, fights with an old colleague, and breaks the rules to accomplish what he must. Shiner had, in fact, succeeded in a feat most writers find impossible: presenting a convincing, sympathetic and lively picture of a genius.

The suspense isn't bad, either.

The supporting cast does not share the luster of the hero, but no one is unrealistic or unbelievable. The nature of the plot and the antagonists is still to be revealed; the difficulty the hero faces in simply dealing with those on his own side rang true enough. This is neither predictable nor ordinary, and the scope of its subject is broader than it appears at first glance.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★

The Psycho #1 was the surprise of the batch. With its garish cover and unprepossessing advertisements, I expected something both ugly and stupid.

It all goes to show you can't judge a comic book by its cover. *The Psycho* was well-written, intelligent and suspenseful. The plot followed lines I would not have expected, and set up situations that I would not have anticipated. It caught at the feelings and held then till the end, leaving me wondering what was going to happen—and what will happen in future issues.

Ignore the ads: there is a good story here.

What we have is an espionage story in which the primary agents are Freelance Costumed Operatives—super-heroes. These F.C.O.'s are nicknamed Psychos. The ex-C.I.A. hero, Jake Riley, has no superpowers and no costumes, but is caught in the middle of hostile forces when his wife is kidnapped by the enemy, and the U.S. agency he worked for turns on him.

Violent? Yes, and the violence is enhanced by the overbright coloring and the darkness of some panels. This is a comic that can make the nerves squeak...just as it should. There are intriguing glimpses of revisionist history: the President of the United States, for example, is the man who disposed of Hitler. You can't take things for granted here, but the background is not confusing.

There are even interesting subtexts. Jake Riley, living amidst mayhem and violence, losing the stabilities of his life, falls into violent and ghastly dreams of revenge and power. Is this metaphor for the superhero fantasy?

The enemy seems to consist of the nameless, costumed superbeings who flee to the island of Aldaria to escape taxes. They are more sinister than otherwise, but they resemble the assorted super-heroes of familiar comics. This is *Watchmen* turned upside down. Is President Zimmerman good or bad? Is the C.I.A.?

The story is complex and subtle enough that I am still guessing...But there are no doubts as to the heroism of Jake Riley, whose violent impulses do not include murdering children.

There are some writers in comics who still know what a protagonist should be like.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½



MARVEL TRADING CARDS

by Bob Sodaro

By way of a disclaimer, I would like to point out that I collect comics. As a rule most comic-book related licensed items don't attract me, as I really enjoy comics, and tend to shin on the extraneous items. I also usually ignore the media-generated "hot" items aimed at the heart of the fan market. Needless to say, I naturally shun multiple-bagged, foil-embossed, variant covers, and/or different colored comics—I buy 'em to read 'em—period. To be sure, my collection does include a fair amount of comic-related toys, T-shirts, pins, etc., most of which was purchased on a whim, or given to me as a gift.

This is why I was somewhat bemused at the packs of Impel Marvel Universe trading cards my brother gave me as a Christmas gift last year. "Oh, this is, ah . . . cool, I suppose," I said at the time. However, after sorting through and categorizing them I did go out and buy more; "Might as well complete the set," I thought.

That was almost two years ago. Today I claim ownership over two complete sets of Series 1 and three complete sets of Series 2 (plus numerous duplicates, and variant issues of both series).

What attracts me to these cards is almost inexplicable, as they don't advance the storylines of the comics, add to my understanding of the characters, or even increase the value of my collection. But still, they are the coolest thing. My enjoyment of them is due in part to the excellent production values, as well as the first-rate artwork and incisively-written text features on the backs of each card. Not only is the overall card design quite attractive, but the art is actually more enticing than some of the stuff in the *Marvel Universe* comics.



Both sets are 162 cards plus five holograms randomly inserted in the wax packs. The 1990 series has seven subsets: Super Heroes (including three version of Spider-Man, and two each of Wolverine and the Hulk); Super-Villains (including Kingpin, Ultron, Black Cat and Venom); Rookies (Ghost Rider, Deathlok, Guardians of the Galaxy, Foolkiller, Nomad, and the New Warriors); Famous Battles (Thing vs. the Hulk, FF vs. Galactus, Nick Fury vs. Hydra, etc.), Most



Valuable Comics (MVC), covers of *Fantastic Four* #1, *Amazing Fantasy* #15 (first Spidey), *Journey Into Mystery* #83 (first Thor), *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 (first Punisher), and *Tales of Suspense* #39 (first Iron Man); Teams (X-Men, FF, New Mutants, Excalibur, Sinister Six, Hellfire Club); and an even dozen cards of Spidey and a co-star telling a series of jokes (Spidey: "How come your kids Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch turned out to be good guys?" Magneto: "I'm a failure as a father.")

The final pair of cards are Stan Lee (from an old *FOOM* cover) made up as a composite of several of the Marvel heroes, and a checklist of all the cards. The five hologram cards that are randomly packed in the set reproduce cards from the regular line (Cosmic Spider-Man, Magneto, Silver Surfer, Wolverine, and Spidey vs. the Green Goblin). The holograms are brilliantly done and really do give a 3-D effect.

The backs of each card give us vital statistics on each character's real name, group affiliation, battles fought, first appearance, etc., a brief bio of the character; as well as "mug shot" and a trivia-like "did you know" tid-bit about them. The backs of the hologram cards differ from the regular backs in all details: bios, mug shot, and "did you know," plus they list all five holograms, and give abridged statistics.

While one might think that yearly issuance of the same group of heroes and villains would wear thin (hey, The National League at least gets to trade players between teams—you won't catch Marvel and DC swapping Spider-Man for Green Lantern, the new Robin, and a hero to be named later), the 1991 set does differ from the '90 set significantly enough to make it a likewise enjoyable set to collect. The layout differs on both sides of the cards with the 1991 appearing in a Marvel logo at the top left of each card, slightly different borders on the front and a D&D-type rating chart on the back offering us visual depictions of six different power ratings (strength, speed, agility, stamina, durability, and intelligence—cards 159-161 explain how the charts work).

Again, the 162-card set (and five holograms) are broken up into sections: heroes, villains, rookies, and teams. New this time are weapons (Cap's shield, Wolverine's claws, Thor's Hammer, etc.), and Legends (heroes and villains who have died: Captain Marvel, Bucky, Green Goblin, Dark Phoenix, and others). Also different this time around are the Holograms, which feature original art. The backs of the '91 set again give vital statistics, a bio (both different than last year's) and a mug shot of the character (with teams, the shot is of their headquarters, and the roster listed).

Two anomalies of the twin sets occurred with Impel issuing a pair of special sets to complement each series. The second set was actually issued first. Five cards packed in the pre-bagged *X-Force* #1 (Cable, Shat-





terstar, Deadpool, Sunspot & Gideon, and and X-Force team shot. A special X-Force T-shirt order card also came packed with each comic). These cards are numbered 1-5 and feature both an X-Force and Marvel logo on the front. The other set is a reprinting of the intitial series that come packed in the new X-Men action figures; these cards are the same on the front, with the backs rendered in a different color and the "did you know" section dropped in favor of the Toy Biz logo.

These sets are rendered so fine that the only complaint I have is the way the backs look in reference to the fronts. That is to say, if you were to display the cards in a binder (Impel kindly markets one via mail-order from the wax packs as well as a special tin to store them in if you so choose), the vertical cards will display just fine, but the horizontal cards don't quite match up. In the first series, some horizontal cards have vertical backs, while other have horizontal backs. Plus, if you store all your horizontal cards one way, you would have to flip your binder over the other way to read the text. In the '91 all the backs of the horizontal cards go the same way (horizontal) but again, you would have to flip the binder the other way to read them.

Still, this is perhaps a minor point, as both series are still very dynamic and eye-catching in overall presentation and production. One can only wonder what Impel will do in a '92 series (already an X-Men-exclusive set is planned for the first part of next year). Good marketing dictates that the popular characters and heavy hitters will be required to make appearances (Spidey, Wolverine and the rest of the X-Men family, Ghost Rider, etc.), but one can only hope that some of the secondary characters will pop up (Aunt May had a card in 1990, and J.J.J. shared a card with his arch-foe, Spider-Man in '91), but it would be really nice to see folks like Joe "Robbie" Robertson, General "Thunderbolt" Ross, Betty Brant, Dum Dum Dugan, and others.

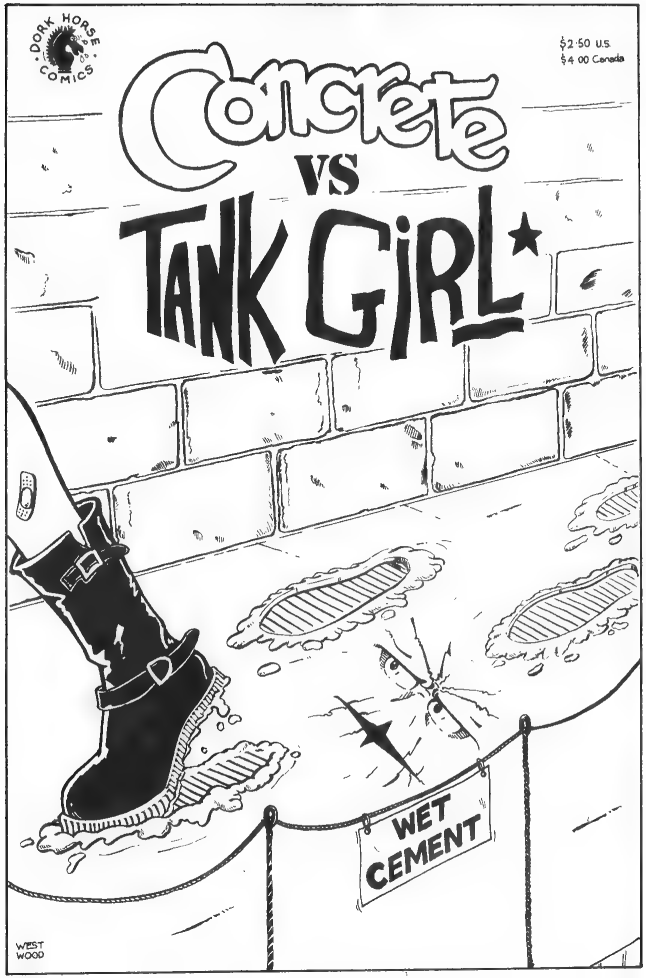
GRADE: ★ ★ ★

Elevating Stan Lee and pals to acclaim once reserved for sports figures, Marvel trading cards offer fans information, vital statistics and trivia about super-heroes. But we would like to know Stan's Earned Run Average.



SILLY COVER

by Ian Westwood



Amazing READERS

Send your comments on AH or any comics-related topic to: Amazing Readers, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115

CHRISTIAN MUMFORD
Oslo, Norway

Super-Hero Songs: Sing, Sing, Sing

I wanna be me! Hey, just because you didn't print the postscript revealing the true identity of Sidney Mellon doesn't mean you can call me "????" and send me to California! Well, okay, that last bit ain't too bad since I live in Norway. . .It is true that I sometimes think I'm a small village overlooking the river Avon in 2000 B.C., though. I have come up with more interesting and all-adult, astounding high adventure comic-rock facts.

On the Butthole Surfers' latest album, *Piuohged*, there is a song called "No, I'm Iron Man" which is actually quite. . .interesting. The Meteors did a song called "Swamp Thing" which is on the same record with a Silver Surfer song, called something like "Surfing the Spaceways", I believe. They have also recorded "Mutant Rock" and "Scream of the Mutants", but I don't know whether or not it is about Marvel-Mutants. An obscure (and really bad) Aussie pop-group of the '80s called themselves "The Uncanny X-Men" and used the Marvel-logo. Some person named Joe Satriani did a record with an eye-catching Silver Surfer/Galactus cover called "Surfing With the Alien". Does Marvel know about this? If they do, the poor bastard's probably snuffed it by now. Marillion did a 17-minute epic called "Grendel" which is based on the original poem rather than Matt Wagner's creation. So why mention it? I dunno. . . .it's a great song anyway.

In the video for Genesis' "Land of Confusion" Ronald Reagan is seen wearing a Superman costume. On the cover of Pink Floyd's *A Nice Pair* there is a guy reading '60s Marvels (*Dr. Strange* and *Silver Surfer*), looking quite happy as a matter of fact—whether it's because of the books or something else we'll never know). BBC did a 1968 documentary about the Doors called *The Doors are Open*, where between concert clips and interviews, pages from *Thor, Dr. Strange* and *Silver Surfer* are flashed across the screen. Are they symbolic of Jim Morrison's LSD hallucinations? Or is it a prophecy of the current all-encompassing Marvel-glut which will herald the Apocalypse, only eight years away (Hey-ho! Let's go!)?

Too bad we don't know about that either, since knowing is half the battle. The other half is actually hitting your opponents. Am I ranting? Doctor? HELP!! They're coming to take me away, Ha-haaa!!!!

P.S. Just between you and me. . . Gerard Jones IS Sidney Mellon. . . What do I win?

● *Sidney's everlasting contempt. He's been trying to surpress that silly rumor for years. When you're working hard to establish a reputation as a credible writer, comparison to some one like Gerry Jones can be damaging to your career.*

Sorry about the confusion over your name. There apparently wasn't any on your letter at that time. I don't know where the goofed address came from though. —TH

LETTER PAGE CONTEST WINNER: WOOD VS. STROM!

AND THE WINNER IS. . .

Cynthia Fluharty for her sincere tribute to Dave Strom in *AH* #196. I realize that this is twice in a row that I've given the prize to a long, sincere answer instead of a humorous one. This doesn't mean I have a preference for them. It's just that the slew of short, snappy answers canceled themselves out.

In fact, I almost gave the prize to Delmo Walters, Jr., who said he couldn't stand either of them!

And in case you're wondering: of the letters sent in addressing this specific contest, four voted for "Strom's Index," one for "The Cartoonist," and one for neither.

I thought this would settle this debate once and for all. . .until I looked at the "Strom's Index" for this issue!

—Thomas Harrington

KEVIN M. MATHEWS
Singapore

Sgt. Rock (& Roll)

Comics-In-Songs: Some songs you guys might have missed: (1) "Sgt. Rock (Is Going To Help Me)" from XTC's 1980 *Black Sea* LP; (2) "That's Really Super, Supergirl" from XTC's 1986 *Skylarking* LP; (3) XTC's alter ego, the Dukes of Stratosphear's "Brainiac's Daughter" from 1987's *Psonic Psunspot* LP!!!

Going For Number Three: There appears to be three contenders for the third biggest comics company: (1) Dark Horse, who might as well be called "Movie Tie-Ins 'R' Us", (2) Tundra, Kevin Eastman's gift back to comics bought with Turtle$ money, (3) Valiant: Jim Shooter, back from the dead and, surprisingly, creatively reborn. Can an AH feature be far away?

Archie Gets Continuity: Jughead with a mohawk?! What's next? Is nothing sacred? Will Kid Eternity turn out to be an agent of chaos—oops!

"Infernal Gall—The Comic": And you thought his writing was bad!?! No. . .seriously. . .I thought it had a *real* surreal feel to it. Sort of like "anything you can do, I can't do better!" Maybe Donna Barr was right and all critics should hand in their poison pens. Wouldn't that be boring?

Comic Book Greats: If I handed to you a videotape with that title, who do you think would be featured? Eisner? Kirby? Crumb? How about McFarlane & Liefeld?!! Ridiculous, isn't it? "Sad, but true!"

Marvel—62 percent Market Share: What's next? More scams, more rip-offs and more X-crement!

I'll try not to be so vague with my comments next time around. Hey, give Lon Wolf a column!!!

Don't spook the horse.

P.S. Metallica. Howling great!!!

● *Aw, come on, do you really think that a tape hosted by Stan Lee and copyright ©Excelsior Productions is going to have Robert Crumb on it? What* really *surprised me was that the cover illustration was ©Todd McFarlane!*

Yes, an AH *feature on Valiant isn't far behind. It's in February, to be precise. And believe it or not, Adam-Troy will do* another *comics column soon, only this time, someone else will be drawing it.* —TH



MITCHELL EVANS
Chicago, IL.

In Support of Andy Mangels

I'm writing this letter in support of Andy Mangels' column. As far as I know this is still a free country with a diverse culture. Why should Andy, myself and others (more than some people suspect) deny our gay aspect so not to offend insecure fanboys? People, grow up! Would you disown or turn on that favorite author, teacher, football player, actor, etc. if you found out he/she was gay? If you said yes, what if it was a family member? So what if someone's different, that's what makes life so interesting. For most of my life I had to read or view the 'Norman Rockwell' look of American civilization. And we know America is much more than that. Give different people a chance. The worst that could happen is that you would learn something interesting.

● *While I don't agree with all the things said by those "fanboys," I do think they were more angry about the potential damage to their favorite TV show and its star (though Andy pointed out that the show was long gone) than they were about finding that their hero was gay. The main issue was that of "outing" (whether "closet" homosexuals should be exposed in order to further gay rights).* —TH

JULIO DIAZ
Tampa, Florida

Morning Chip! Morning Wizard!

In response to the Letter Page Contest in *Amazing Heroes* #195, the original Captain Marvel's facial features were modeled after Fred MacMurray, star of *My Three Sons* and *The Absent-Minded Professor*, among other classics. As I'm sure you know, Fred passed away less than two weeks before *AH* #195 hit the streets.

When I read the question, I thought it was ridiculously easy, but then I tried it on a few of my friends, and found they didn't know! I've been a Captain Marvel fan since I was about 6 years old, when the old live action "Shazam!/Isis" was still on. My mom made me a Captain Marvel costume back then, and I wore it on Halloween for about three years!

On another subject, in Andy Mangels' reply to the question about John Wesley Shipp's "outing," he seems to suggest that DC had something to do with the attempts to hide his sexual preference. I would like to see some kind of follow-up on this, as I certainly hope that it isn't true! DC has several gay characters currently appearing, including Foxglove, Hazel, and Wanda (Alvin) in *Sandman*, Liz in *Swamp Thing*, and the Pied Piper in *Flash*. I would consider it very hypocritical of DC to "close the closet door" on someone who appears on a show based on a book that features a major gay character! Maybe someday there won't be homophobia, and all people will truly be considered equal.

I am not gay, but I believe that gay rights are basic human rights. No one should be denied due to their sexual preference.

PETER IORILLO
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Two Contests for the Price of One

For what it's worth I like "Strom's Index" more than The Cartoonist approximately 4:3. It's close and "The Cartoonist" is gaining fast.

And here's another addition to your Superman in song list that I did not see mentioned in your pages: Karyn White did a song entitled "Superwoman" that was released a couple of years ago.

Oh, can I take a shot at your Captain Marvel contest? My guess is Clark Gable. Actually it's my father's answer so if he's right give him the credit and me the comics.

That's it. Thanks. Keep up the good work. See ya next month.

MARK ALFRED
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

You Want Trivia? You Got Trivia!

If you're gonna have trivia for your letters page contest, why not try some harder ones? Like:

Q: The cover to (new series) *Superman* #29—"Another city's been *murdered*! And this time the Man of Stell will *not* accept the blame!" — was copied (oops, "inspired") without giving credit, from what classic Silver Age cover? A: *Action* #300's "Superman Under the Red Sun" (May 1963).

Q: When Lex Luthor's parents changed their family name to Thorul and moved from Smallville, what reason did they give their daughter Lena for Lex's absence? A: "Er... our brother got killed in a mountain-climbing accident!" (*Action* #295).

Q: In the classic Superman mythos, what's the difference between a Drang and a Vrang? A: A Drang is a giant, one-horned, flying, thought-to-be-extinct Kryptonian serpent which Superman becomes through the agency of Red Kryptonite in *Action* #303. A Vrang is a member of a race that long ago enslaved the Pacifistic Kryptonians until Val-lor inspired a revolt (*Superman* #174).

Q: In the classic "Superman's Return to Krypton" (*Superman* #141, November 1960), how did Superman get there? A: He accidentally crashed through the time barrier while chasing a weird space creature as big as a planet.

Oh yeah... I thought "everyone" knew Captain Marvel's face was patterned on the matinee-perfect features of Fred MacMurray. Yes, before *My Three Sons* were "My Three Marvels." Has anyone talked to Mr. MacMurray and found out of he knew this, and his opinion of it?

● *Alas, if they haven't by now, we'll never know. I'm sure the sad news reached by this time.* —TH

TIM GEARY
Erie, Pennsylvania

A Moment for Fred

The answer to your trivia question in #195 is, in an unfortunate bit of timing, Fred MacMurray. This is unfortunate because only days after getting this issue, I found out that Fred MacMurray had passed away from pneumonia. I had planned a witty letter filled with all sorts of quips in order to win this contest. But in light of his passing, I thing we should all give a moment of silence for this fine man. While we're at it, perhaps one more for C.C. Beck, without him there would be no "Shazam" to bring a little magic to us all.

MICHAEL ANTHONY CARROLL
Anytown, USA

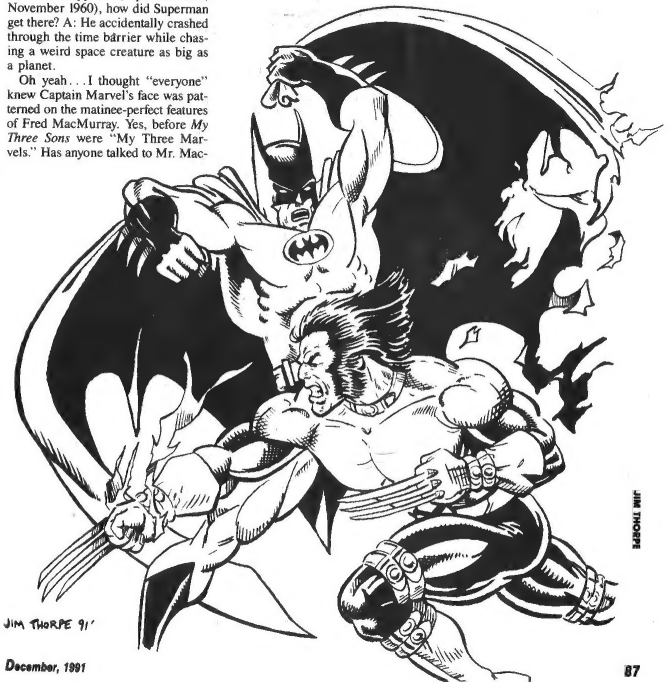
Fred or Jack?

The original Captain Marvel (or Captain Thunder, as he was known at that particular moment) was modelled after actor Fred MacMurray; according to E. Nelson Bridwell, in his introduction to *Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*.

> "Later, the face became more rounded, and D.C. (Beck) conceded that Cap had come to look a bit more like Jack Oakie."

Billy Batson was modelled after Freddie Bartholomew, whom I guess would be to Fred Savage what Jackie Coogan is to Macauley Culkin, or vice versa (Hmmm — if they'd waited another 30 years for an Addams Family revival...)

I was all set to add that Mr. Mac-



AMAZING HEROES IS LOOKING FOR THE ADDRESSES OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

Greg Budgett — **Mike Raabe**
David Linabury — **John R. Statema**
Bill Marimon — **&**
John Nordland — **Stan Timmons**

PLEASE DROP US A NOTE.

Murray went on to TV fame in the series *My Three Lt. Marvels*; you remember, Don Grady as Tall Marvel, Tim Considine as Disney Marvel, Barry Livingston as Hornrimmed Marvel, and as Uncle Marvel, Fred Mertz, but then he had to go and take that great leap to the Rock of Eternity. Talk about Double Indemnity...

CHRIS KHALAF
Houston, Texas

O Captain, Dear Captain

The original Captain Marvel was modelled after actor Fred MacMurray. Unfortunately, in latter years, DC's artists have forgotten this, and Capt. Marvel hasn't always looked proper. Hopefully, Jerry Ordway in his new series will return the Big Red Cheese not only to his former facial features, but to his former glory as well. Remember, Captain Marvel once outsold Superman in his heyday, and his popularity was so great he was featured bi-weekly instead of monthly!

Thank you.

DAVE COLLIER
Saskatoon, Sask., CANADA

The "Billboard" of Comics

Thanks for the *Amazing Heroes*, and the big box of comics! I've been living in some out of the way spots for the past five or six years now, so I haven't even *seen* most of this stuff before—wow! It's like Christmas in October around the Collier household today!

Found your magazine interesting! Favorite parts were your editorial (*I've* got a copy of *Seduction of the Innocent*—found it in the city library's 25-cent discard bin), "Coming Distractions" and "Amazing Readers," with people sending in their art!

Guess around the Fantagraphics offices, *The Comics Journal* is kinda the "artsy" magazine...*Amazing Heroes* is more like the *Billboard* or *Variety* of the comics business, with the cold, hard numbers.

Another thing I liked was the story on Neal Adams. I used to have one of these huge collections of super-hero books. Hundreds and hundreds of 'em! DC's, Marvels, Neal Adams, Kirby, *Swamp Thing*! The whole shmeal!

But I lost interest in these Marvels an' DCs, and one day in 1982 I gave 'em all (except for two dozen that had genuine value to me in my heart) away to the guy who took my place in the apartment after the woman I was living with kicked me out!

Guess *Amazing Heroes* is Fantagraphics' No. 1 book, huh? Like to hear the history of your company one day!

● *Glad you liked those comics you got in exchange for your very funny "Silly Cover" that issue.*

AH *is "cold" and "hard?" Maybe we should bring back "Ten of a Kind."*

My review of Seduction of the Innocent *was more timely than I thought, what with Kitchen Sink about to make it available again. Check it out comics fans! The influence of this book is still felt by comics today.*

Actually, Love & Rockets *remains Fantagraphics' top seller. And yes, I'd like to see a history of Fantagraphics too. I've been here for two years, and there's still a lot I don't know about it.* —TH

DAVID QUINN and TIM VIGIL
Rebel Studios
Ann Arbor, Michigan

A Real Horror Story

We're in a community consensus on licensing horror stories. We thought Rebel Studios had faced the worst here in the States when we collected no royalties from the reprints and portfolios distributed in 1990 and 1991 by Northstar, [and] its veil company, Arpad.

Then, a few sharp-eyed comics retailers pointed out yet another package containing unauthorized Quinn and Vigil material, *Splatter*.

Thanks, folks. And thanks also to Wayne Markley, of Capital City Distribution. Wayne made a copy of the *Faust* issue, *Splatter Numero 3*—the horror anthology published in Spain—available immediately. Wayne even provided another one when the first package went awry in the mail! Most of all, he made it clear that Capital City would not distribute *Splatter* if its publisher continued to use our names to promote it without our permission.

We hope the editor in Barcelona does [reply to our letter]; he'd better hurry, though, because we are already negotiating with an agent to handle world rights—outside North America, where we will continue to publish ourselves.

Note: Spain's *Splatter Numero 3* should not be confused with the *Splatter Number 1* available from Northstar last year. Although we've often been asked if we're publishing this title, Rebel Studios is not involved with their *Splatter*, period. Thanks for letting us clear this up.

MARK PHILLIPS
Johnson City, TN

Top 14 List

And now for my views on Amazing Heroes #194.

1) You forgot another of the great super-hero questions: Why does someone suspect a super-hero's secret identity simply because the two are never together? ("Aha!! Willy Weakling and Supercrotch have never been seen together at the bathhouse! I wonder...") Hell, I've never seen Jim Shooter and Pee Wee Herman in the same place at the same time, but that doesn't mean that...well, poor example.

2) Did Michael Gray inflate his hair with helium? Marge Simpson would be proud!

3) The next series from Tome Press is the Illustrated *Webster's Dictionary*, with three issues devoted to the Todd McFarlane "Aardvark" storyline. Other famous writers and artists involved with the project are Steve Ditko (doing "Background"), Keith Giffen ("Nostril"), Chris Claremont ("Chaos"), Andy Mangels ("Antidisestablishmentarianism") and John Byrne, who will be doing "Continuity" but only the first three letters and will spell it with a "K".

4) Are we not proof that the universe is a drooling idiot with no fashion sense?

5) Stan Lee is a mutant.

6) So am I, but I try not to flaunt it in front of the Moral Majority.

7) When do we get to see the Jimmy Olsen, Boy Toy of Superman miniseries? I long for the good old days of Jimmy going around in go-go mini-skirts!

8) Captain Picard buffs his head on Will Riker's tongue. ("Take it slow, Number One!") That's why Willie-boy keeps turning down his own command!

9) I am not a Wolf! I'm just proof that great minds think alike...and then refuse to write to *Amazing Heroes*!

10) I can't wait to see Jughead's affair with Miss Grundy! She attracts him by holding hamburgers between her thighs and frizzing her hair like Ronald McDonald.

11) I'm sorry, #11 is not at home at this time. Please leave your message at the sound of the beep.

12) Beep!

13) Damn! I hate these machines!

14) Remember: If you're out of condoms, then only have sex with Plastic Man! Better safe than mutated!

KEVIN LONERGAN
Merrick, New York

Batman and [your name here]

Can't stop reading *Amazing Heroes*. Perhaps the greatest comic magazine around, full of interesting columns and stories. Now let's see, what's on my mind today? Oh yeah, now I remember!

First, I like to say that I enjoy comics by Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, Fantagraphics, and the like. I don't care what people say because I enjoy their stories, their characters, and their artwork. There's something for everybody, so now's the time to look for your very own.

Batman, what can I say? With Tim Drake as Robin, it gets better and better. He's opening up now, and is becoming more of a crime-fighter than a crazed vigilante.

Speaking of which, I know the Batman contest is over, but I have a lot of team-ups that'll make you go "HHMMMM."

For starters, how about teaming up Batman with/or against Spider-Man, Captain America, Iron Man, Wolverine, and Punisher. For a really good time, how about the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, Daredevil, and Silver Surfer. And for you villain-lovers out there, how about Batman fighting Doctor Doom, the Red Skull, Magneto, Kingpin, the Lizard, Venom Hobgoblin, and the Green Goblin. (And you though the Joker was crazy.)

And for all you weirdoes out there, how about Batman encountering the likes of Usagi Yojimbo, The Flaming Carrot, Aliens and even Godzilla. (For the latter two, Superman, Lobo, and the Justice League can help the Dark Knight fight these two monstrosities.)

Well, before I go, I ask that all you fans of *The Flash* and *Superboy* TV shows, to show your support and write to CBS and Viacom. If you want, I will send to both of these media a package or maybe even packages of letters and petitions showing support for these fine quality programs. Here's where to write:

Either: Save the Flash, or Save Superboy
c/o Kevin Lonergan
130 Hewlett Ave.
Merrick, NY 11566

Well, gotta' go now. Thanks for reading this and I hope you enjoy the picture I enclosed.

● *Nice list. I guess the villain most people would like to see Bats take on is the Kingpin, who seems like he was destined to fight the Caped Crusader, (cool look, great gimmicks, impressive physical prowess). If Batman's gotta fight against a Japanese character, how about Golgo 13, the supreme assassin?* —TH

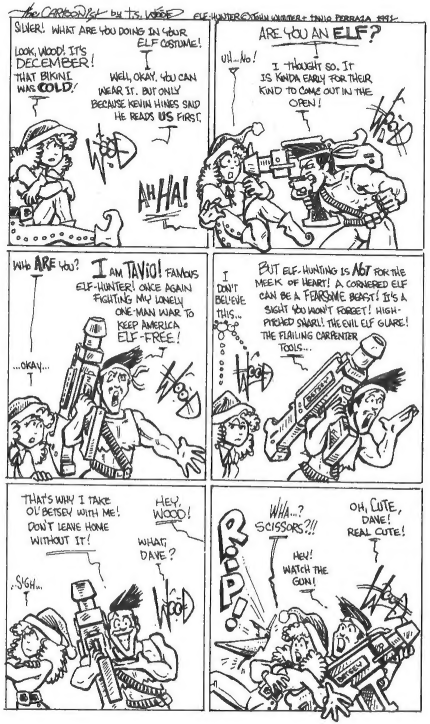
LETTERS PAGE CONTEST:

SPOT THE TYPO!

Hey, we have no shame. The reader who points out most impressive typo(s) in this issue, will get $10 in Fantagraphics comics. Both quantity and quality of goof-ups will be measured.

Deadline: January 31, 1992.

Our promise: There are *no* intentional typos in this issue.



STROM'S INDEX

by Dave Strom

Chances of Lex Luthor's pre-Crisis power suit and Monarch's power suit having been separated at birth: 9 in 10

Rate of the frames in the *Darkwing Duck* cartoons: Lots per second

Rate in the *Hammerman* cartoons: Once in a while

If the recently attempted sex change of Captain America had been successful, chances of his costume having been redesigned to show cleavage: 3 in 4

Ratio of the jobs Jimmy Olsen has to mishaps that get him fired: 1:1

Minimum number of hour per week that Jimmy Olsen would have to work in order to be fully employed, according to the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics: 1 (page 52 *)

Percentage of Clark Kent's and Lois Lane's newspaper articles that are primarily based on their digging in files or interviewing experts and members of the public: 99

Percentage of a random sample of 2850 New York Times and Washington Post articles that were primarily based on the words of government officials: 78 (page 17 *)

The most frequent guests in comic books other than their own: Wolverine, Batman, Superman, Ghost Rider

The most frequent guests on the supposedly unbiased television news show *Nightline*, according to a 1989 study by Fairness and Accuracy in Media: Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, Elliot Abrams, Jerry Falwell (page 27 *)

** To see the ways that our government and our media pads statistics and manipulates the news to keep us dumb and happy, read* Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media *by Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon.*

Chances of the above statistics being accurate, since I made them all up (except for the *Unreliable Sources excerpts*): 1 in 1000

Now, it's time for...



DAVE'S CONTEST BETWEEN STROM'S INDEX
AND THE CARTOONIST

(Mine lets you choose from more than Tom's. More is better.)

Follow these steps:

1. Circle your choice on the list.
2. Clip out the list (with long, sharp pointy scissors that will stick into The Cartoonist and maybe poke Wood right in the "W." Mnyahhahahahahaaaa!)
3. Send it to "Amazing Readers" or whoever else is not getting enough junk mail.

I like "Strom's Index"

I like the editorial or "Infernal Gall" or "Backstage" or some of that other stuff

I like chocolate

I like Ike

I like buying X-anything by the dozen

I love Lucy

I ♥ my cocker spaniel

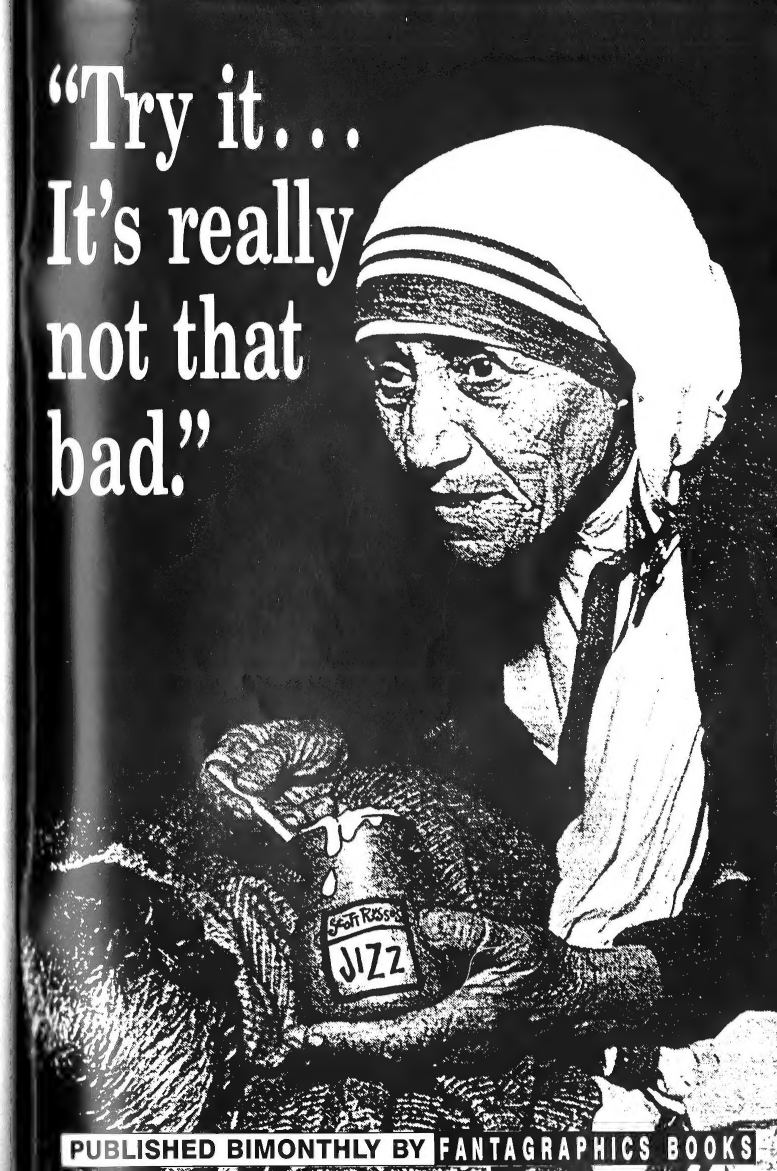
I like cutting stuff out of magazines, even though you will then RUIN the resale value of this copy of Amazing Heroes *so you'd better rush out and buy a spare issue because either me or Teri might be famous someday*

"DAVE, aren't you forgetting something?"

[I'm so sorry, Teri. The above "_____" is "I find The Cartoonist sort of tolerable" in very fine print.]

"Dave, make sure your health insurance is paid up by next month."

"Try it... It's really not that bad."



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____ USAGI & TOMOE LARGE
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